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## PART II

### Introduction

THUS far the argument has been mainly destructive, inevitably so given the false assumptions of previous work in the field.

But a number of positive conclusions have emerged on the way, most notably that the focus of *all* Blue and Green activity is to be sought, not in some imaginary 'deme-structure' of the cities, nor in a hardly more real 'urban militia', nor yet in social and religious groupings, but (as common sense might already have suggested) in the hippodrome (and, as we shall see, theatre) itself. We saw also that contemporaries regularly thought of Blues and Greens as the *youth* of the cities, further ground for believing that they really were what their names imply, circus and theatre fan clubs.

So rather than start from the assumption that the Blues and Greens of the late Empire are political parties in their own right, without bothering to offer more than a half-hearted guess as to how such parties came to develop from (of all things) circus fan clubs, let us instead trace the development of circus fan clubs (Chs. VIII–IX), and examine the role of the hippodrome and theatre in the political life of the Principate (Ch. VII). If we can but rid ourselves of this unwarranted assumption that the games themselves were only the thinnest of façades for political activity (try telling a Byzantine that *anything* was more important than the games!), we shall discover a perfectly rational explanation for the remarkable transformation of the Blues and Greens of the Principate, in terms of the changing organization of the games (Ch. VIII) and the traditional relationship of the emperor and his people at the games (Ch. VII).

If we approach the factions through the games, we shall also discover that the traditional view presents altogether too schematized and static a picture even of the factions of the late Empire. Not merely have scholars overlooked the elements of continuity between the early and late Empire: they have drawn

the boundary between them in the wrong place. The peculiar characteristics of the Byzantine factions have been traced right back to the foundation of Constantinople, whereas they do not in fact emerge till the end of the fifth century. On the other hand, by the early seventh they have changed again. And the development continued, with the factions climbing to a peak of importance (though a quite different sort of importance) in the ninth and tenth centuries—a period when on the traditional view they had long been stripped of their former power.

## VII. The Emperor and His People at the Games

It has long been customary to draw a sharp contrast between the feckless, degenerate, work-shy plebs of early imperial Rome concerned only with its bread and circuses, and the alert, fearless, freedom-loving people of Constantinople, represented by the circus factions. It would be hard to say which side of the contrast is more false.

Naturally enough this one chapter cannot hope (and does not attempt) to treat the relationship between plebs and princeps in all its manifestations throughout the Principate.<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the purpose of this book it will concentrate on their common meeting place in the theatres and circuses of Rome. Not the only approach to the question, of course, but a more direct route to the wider issues than might at first sight appear.

'The hundreds of thousands of Roman citizens who lived in Rome', wrote Rostovtzeff, '... readily acquiesced in the gradual reduction of the popular assembly under Augustus to a mere formality; they offered no protest when Tiberius suppressed even this formality, but they insisted on their right, acquired under the civil war, to be fed and amused by the government.'<sup>2</sup> This is not untrue, but it is a rather misleading formulation. It is of course true enough that in A.D. 15 the people lost the right to elect praetors and consuls. But what were praetors and consuls to the people of A.D. 15? It was to the princeps that the

<sup>1</sup> For the Julio-Claudians there is now Z. Yavetz's useful study *Plebs and Princeps* (1969). For the later Principate, little but Friedlaender, and C. R. Whittaker, *Historia* xiii (1964), 348-69 (often inaccurate). There is not much that is relevant in *Die Rolle der Plebs in spätrömischen Reich*, ed. V. Beševliev and W. Seyfarth (Berlin 1969). In general see R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (1966), 163f. and T. W. Africa, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* ii (1971), 3f.

<sup>2</sup> *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*<sup>2</sup> (1957), 79-80. For a firm rebuttal of this stern view of the Roman plebs see Balsdon, 'Panem et circenses', *Homm. M. Renard* ii (1969), 57f.; also my Inaugural Lecture *Bread and Circuses* (London 1974), on which I have freely drawn.

people now turned in their hour of need. The vote which they lost had long since ceased to be a valid or significant means either of expressing their will or attaining their ends. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than Gaius' unsuccessful attempt to reintroduce popular elections in 38; the people were not interested, nor were there even enough candidates forthcoming.<sup>1</sup> On matters which really concerned them (the price of corn, high taxes, unjust decisions) they could—and did—address specific complaints directly to the one person who could—and often did—offer some redress: the emperor.

Let us begin with what Cicero had to say a century before Gaius discovered the same truth. 'There are three places above all', he wrote in 56 B.C. 'where the will of the people makes itself known: public assemblies (*contiones*), elections (*comitia*), and the games (*ludorum gladiatorumque consessu*)'.<sup>2</sup> The first two had degenerated so far, Cicero roundly declared, that it was only at the games that the true feelings of the people could be discerned: 'the expression of popular opinion which we see at elections and public meetings is sometimes spurious and rehearsed; and while it may be possible to raise a thin smattering of cheers at the theatres or gladiatorial shows with a rented crowd, none the less it is easy enough to see how it is done and who is behind it—and how the majority of honest citizens react.'<sup>3</sup>

Again, when writing to Atticus in 44: 'if you have any news of practical consequence, let me have it in your reply; if not, tell me all about the demonstrations in the theatre and the actors' jests.'<sup>4</sup> The point is perfectly illustrated by the famous letter of July 59, describing the roars of the crowd as the actor Diphilus delivered line after line at Pompey's expense. 'When Caesar entered,' Cicero continued, 'applause was non-existent. He was followed by Curio junior, who received the sort of ovation Pompey used to get in the days before freedom fell. Caesar took it badly, and a letter is said to be winging its way to Pompey in Capua.'<sup>5</sup> In the *pro Sestio* Cicero lists a whole series of lines (§§ 120–6) which various theatre audiences twisted into

<sup>1</sup> Dio, lix.9.6; cf. Jones, *Studies in Roman Government and Law* (1960), 49; Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps*, 103f.

<sup>2</sup> *Pro Sestio* 106.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 115.

<sup>4</sup> *Ad Att.* xiv.3.2 (transl. Shackleton Bailey).

<sup>5</sup> *Ad Att.* ii.19.3 (same transl.); at *Ad Att.* i.16.11 Cicero refers to demonstrations in his own honour at various games in 61.



allusions to his own achievements or his plight in exile. The line that pleased him most was from Accius' *Brutus*,

Tullius, qui libertatem civibus stabiliverat,

where the Tullius is of course Servius Tullius, not Marcus Tullius! We may contrast the line declaimed by the mime-writer Laberius himself before Caesar,<sup>1</sup>

Porro, Quirites, libertatem perdimus.

Late in 44 Cicero alleges that there were demonstrations in favour of Brutus during a performance of another play of Accius at the Ludi Apollinares of July.<sup>2</sup> No doubt these 'plausus vel testimonia potius et indicia populi Romani' were called forth by double entendres of the usual type.<sup>3</sup> In 46 there had been a demonstration in the theatre about the validity of Fabius Maximus' consulate.<sup>4</sup>

'The exaggerated importance attached by Cicero to these demonstrations has often been remarked', comments a recent editor.<sup>5</sup> There is some exaggeration, certainly. The long passage in the *pro Sestio* contrasting *contiones* and *comitia* unfavourably with the games is inevitably coloured by the events of 58. The *contiones* and *comitia* which had led to Cicero's exile must have been gerrymandered and unrepresentative; while the demonstrations in his favour (and Clodius' disfavour) in the theatres were evidently spontaneous majority reactions. Yet some of the passages quoted above antedate Cicero's exile, nor was he alone in his view. Caelius took the trouble to give him a graphic account of the people hissing Hortensius in the theatre when he was preening himself on a particularly unscrupulous victory in

<sup>1</sup> Macrobius, *Sat.* ii.7.4.

<sup>2</sup> *Phil.* i.36, cf. ii.31. On the complicated history of these games, largely financed by Brutus as urban praetor but actually put on in Brutus' absence by Antony's brother, see Denniston's commentary, p. 91. At the time, Cicero had not been so impressed with these demonstrations (cf. *Ad Att.* xvi.2.3), and modern works offer diametrically opposed interpretations: e.g. compare R. Syme, *Roman Revolution* (1939), 107, with H. B. Mattingly, *Historia* 1960, 427 and S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (1971), 369.

<sup>3</sup> I am very nearly convinced by H. B. Mattingly (*Historia* 1960, 414f.) that Naevius' line 'fato Metelli fiunt Romae consules' was first applied to the Metelli in a similar political revival of c. 115 B.C.

<sup>4</sup> Suetonius, *Jul.* 80.3, with G. V. Sumner, *Phoenix* xxv (1971), 537.

<sup>5</sup> Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* i (1965), 389.

the courts.<sup>1</sup> Atticus too wrote of a demonstration in favour of the 'Liberators' at a theatre in April 44.<sup>2</sup> And Cicero alleges that Piso will not dare to go to the games held to celebrate the dedication of Pompey's theatre in 55 because he is afraid of being hissed.<sup>3</sup>

The validity of Cicero's instinct is confirmed by the fact that, long after *contiones* and *comitia* had disappeared, the people continued to express their hopes, fears, and resentments freely and often forcibly at the public shows. No emperor was able to curb this 'theatri licentia'<sup>4</sup> and many had to bow before it, in matters large and small. To take the sort of phenomenon that Cicero had always felt to be particularly representative of public opinion, nothing, it seems, could dampen the enthusiasm of mime-writers and actors for contemporary allusions—or the readiness with which Roman audiences picked them up.

On one occasion the line 'Videsne ut cinaedus orbem digito temperat' (in fact referring to a priest of the Magna Mater striking a tambourine) was taken—and no doubt intended by the actor—as a homosexual allegation about Augustus.<sup>5</sup> A reference to an 'old goat licking the does (*caprae*)' was taken to denote Tiberius' supposed debaucheries on Capri.<sup>6</sup> Galba's ill-omened entry into Rome in 69 was hit at by a line in a farce, and the people sang the whole song with one voice, to the accompaniment of suitable gestures.<sup>7</sup> The unlettered Maximin was (perhaps fortunately) unable to understand a *risqué* song addressed to him in Greek by a bold actor.<sup>8</sup>

It is a sure index of the quasi-official licence allowed in the theatres that it is only the traditional 'bad' emperors who reacted violently to such ribaldries. For example, Gaius and Domitian are the only emperors recorded to have actually executed actors for double entendres.<sup>9</sup> The most outrageous

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Fam.* viii.2.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ad Att.* xiv.2.1, with Shackleton Bailey's note.

<sup>3</sup> *In Pis.* 65: 'da te populo, committe ludis. sibilum metuis? . . . ne acclametur times?'

<sup>4</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* i.77.1; cf. xi.13.1 'theatralis populi lascivia'; xiii.24.1 'theatralis licentia'; xii.25.4 'ludicra licentia'.

<sup>5</sup> Suet., *Aug.* 68—an allegation illustrated by Calvus' lampoon on Pompey (Morel, *Frag. Po. Lat.*<sup>2</sup> (1927), no. 18, p. 86), which derives from the taunts of Clodius' thugs (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 48.7).

<sup>6</sup> Suet., *Tib.* 45.

<sup>7</sup> Suet., *Galba* 13.

<sup>8</sup> *SHA Max.* viii.3-5 (possibly invented).

<sup>9</sup> Suet., *Calig.* 27.4; *Dom.* 10.

example is the occasion, soon after Agrippina had joined Claudius in untimely death, when a certain Datus sang the popular song 'Goodbye father, goodbye mother' before Nero, miming first drinking and then swimming gestures!<sup>1</sup> All Nero did was exile the man from Italy, 'either because he did not care about such insults', remarks Suetonius, 'or so as not to encourage others by showing himself offended'. Nero understood better than any emperor since Augustus (and most of his successors too) how to win the people's favour, or (in crises where favour was beyond reach) how least to incur their hostility.<sup>2</sup> The good Marcus stolidly sat through the most excruciating puns on the name of his wife's supposed lover,<sup>3</sup> and even his less tolerant son Commodus merely exiled actors who poked fun at his debauchery.<sup>4</sup> It was probably in part at least this sort of thing that Tacitus had in mind when he wrote of the 'seditious' behaviour of actors that led Tiberius to suppress the 'Oscan farce' in 23.<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly enough, in view of the widespread conviction that the late Empire saw a marked increase in the expression of popular opinion in the theatres, this particular practice is never to my knowledge recorded in fifth- or sixth-century Constantinople. Apart from one or two possible examples from fourth-century Antioch,<sup>6</sup> all the early Byzantine period as a whole can offer is the dubious evidence of Choricus for the boldness of mimes in sixth-century Gaza.<sup>7</sup> It would be unwise to press the argument from silence, but it certainly does not look as if the

<sup>1</sup> Suet., *Nero* 39.3, with a list of other lampoons and the like tolerated by Nero (perhaps only in the early years of his reign: cf. H. B. Mattingly, *CR* 1959, 104).

<sup>2</sup> See Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps*, 122f.

<sup>3</sup> *SHA Marcus* xxix.3.

<sup>4</sup> *SHA Comm.* iii.4. (though x.2 shows him less tolerant later in the reign).

<sup>5</sup> *Ann.* iv.14.3—i.e. the Atellana, which was back before long.

<sup>6</sup> See G. Haddad, *Aspects of Social Life in Antioch in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Diss. Chicago 1949), 142f., for incidents involving Julian and Jovian. The jibes, parodies, and so forth mentioned in this connection are not explicitly located in the theatre, but in view of the role of the theatre in demonstrations in late fourth-century Antioch (Petit, *Libanius* (1955), 224f.; Liebeschuetz, *Antioch* (1972), 278–80), it is a reasonable presumption that some at least took place there. For the early empire cf. *HA Verus* 7.4, 'multa ioca in theatro in eum dicta exstant' (to be used with hesitation, since 'exstant' in the *HA* is usually a pointer to forgery: cf. Barnes, *JRS* 1967, 72).

<sup>7</sup> *Apol. Mim.* 119f. (pp. 371–2 Foerster/Richsteig)—dubious because the speech is a highly artificial and specious defence of the mime, arguing *inter alia* and contrary to all our other evidence that, while chariot-racing sets the soul on fire, the mime merely provides harmless entertainment (§114, contrast pp. 223f. below).

emperors of Constantinople had as much to endure in the theatre as their predecessors in Rome.

Much has always been made of the remarkable complaint addressed to Justinian by the Greens, placed by Theophanes among the antecedents to the Nika revolt in January 532.<sup>1</sup> It is certainly a strange and interesting conversation, but those who argue (or imply) that this sort of interchange is a new development of the Byzantine period are evidently unaware what a thoroughly Roman tradition it is. Vasiliev (to quote but one example) interpreted the dialogue as a desperate attempt by Justinian to 'negotiate with the people'.<sup>2</sup> In fact it is no more than a particularly well-documented illustration of the circus petition, exceptional only because by the purest chance a stenographer's record of the actual exchange between emperor and people has come down to us.<sup>3</sup>

From Augustus on it became normal and common for the people to make requests of the emperor at the circus and theatre—requests to which he was morally obliged at least to reply. This was not (of course) the only place where such petitions might be presented, but whereas it was easy enough to deal with petitions presented by individuals or small groups strictly in accordance with the merits of the case, any request made publicly in front of up to 250,000 fellow citizens was potentially political—and not easy to resist. And there can be no doubt that it was at the circus and theatre above all that the Roman emperor was answerable to the voice of his people, on matters great and small alike.

No text better illustrates both the thing itself and the consequences of its injudicious handling than Josephus' account of a circus meeting held a few weeks before the murder of Gaius in January 41:<sup>4</sup>

At this time occurred chariot races. This is a kind of sport to which the Romans are fanatically devoted. They gather enthusiastically in the circus *and there the assembled throngs make requests of the emperors according to their own pleasure. Emperors who rule that such petitions are to be granted automatically are highly popular.* So in this case they desperately entreated Gaius to cut down imposts and grant some relief

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Byzantine Empire* (1952), 157.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 327.

<sup>4</sup> *AJ* xix.24.7(4), in Feldman's translation (with one or two alterations).



from the burden of taxes. But he had no patience with them, and when they shouted louder and louder, he dispatched agents among them in all directions with orders to arrest any who shouted, to bring them forward at once and to put them to death. The order was given and those whose duty it was carried it out. The number of those executed in such summary fashion was very large. The people, when they saw what happened, stopped their shouting and controlled themselves, for they could see with their own eyes that the request for fiscal concessions resulted quickly in their own death. *This strengthened still further Chaerea's determination to embark on the plot and to put an end to Gaius and his brutal fury against mankind.* Often at entertainments [i.e. circus or theatre shows]<sup>1</sup> he had been on the point of acting, yet nevertheless refrained when he calculated his chances. He no longer had any hesitation in his resolve to kill the man, but his search for the best moment continued, since he wished not to resort to violence fruitlessly, but to ensure the success of his plans.

In so far as the aim of the demonstration was to get taxes reduced, it must be judged a failure. The same applies to what appears to have been a series of such occasions described together by Dio under the year 39:<sup>2</sup>

the emperor no longer showed any favours even to the populace, but opposed absolutely everything they wished, and consequently the people on their part resisted all his desires. *The talk and behaviour that might be expected at such a juncture, with an angry ruler on one side and a hostile people on the other, were plainly in evidence.* The contest between them, however, was not an equal one: for the people could do nothing but talk and show something of their feelings by their gestures, whereas Gaius would destroy his opponents, dragging away many even while they were witnessing the games and arresting many more after they had left the theatres.

Yet there was no mistaking the significance of such manifestations as a guide to the waning popularity of Gaius, and there can be little doubt that Josephus was right about the effect of the demonstration of 41 on the resolve of his future assassin. Nor will the praetorians who dragged Claudius out from behind his

<sup>1</sup> As can be seen from the eventual plan to kill him during the *ludi Palatini* (A7 xix.75-6, cf. note B on p. 251 of the Loeb edition). The 'Pisonian' conspirators of 65 similarly plotted to kill Nero at the games (Tacitus, *Ann.* xv.48f.). And cf. the plot against Commodus described by Herodian, i.10.5f.

<sup>2</sup> lix.13.3-4.

curtain after the deed was done have forgotten that when he had presided at the games in Gaius' place, the people greeted him with the cry 'Hail, brother of Germanicus'.<sup>1</sup> However unsuitable Claudius might have seemed to those who knew him, his reception in the circus plainly marked him out as a candidate acceptable to the masses.

And if the protest of 41 was itself fruitless, the same could not be said of all such protests. In 19, for example, Tiberius agreed to fix prices after a popular outcry against the expense of corn.<sup>2</sup> Again, in 58, when the people demonstrated against those responsible for the collection of indirect taxes, Nero at once reviewed the entire system, winning even Tacitus' admiration for his measures.<sup>3</sup> And it was in direct response to a circus demonstration in Antioch that Julian set out on his ill-fated attempt to control corn prices there in 362-3.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Josephus' remark that the emperors normally granted petitions made at the games is amply borne out by the examples that have come down to us.<sup>5</sup> The complaisant Titus made a promise (which he kept) before a gladiatorial show that he would grant *anything* he was asked.<sup>6</sup> The stern Tiberius once made the mistake of moving a statue he happened to like from the baths of Agrippa to his own palace. At his next visit to the theatre the people insisted that he put it back.<sup>7</sup> After another such experience, when he was 'forced' (*coactus*) to manumit an actor, he simply gave up attending the games, 'so that he should not be faced with petitions'<sup>8</sup>—an omission for which he was never forgiven by the people.<sup>9</sup> Contrast the younger

<sup>1</sup> Suet., *Claud.* 7.

<sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* ii.87 (for Tiberius' concern with the corn supply on other occasions, see Yavetz, *Plebs and Princes*, 107).

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* xiii.50; neither here nor in ii.87 is there specific mention of circus or theatre, but (as Furneaux remarks ad loc.) where else could it have been? The same would apply to the dialogue between Alexander Severus and the people on the same issue at *HA Alex.* 22.7—were it not fictitious (see p. 168, n.1 below).

<sup>4</sup> Libanius, *Or.* xviii.195 (bibliography in Norman's note ad loc., Loeb ed. i (1969), 408).

<sup>5</sup> On the general principle of the emperor's obligation to deal with his subjects' petitions cf. the story about Hadrian in Dio lxix.6.3, with F. Millar, 'Emperors at Work', *JRS* 1967, 9f., (though it should be added that the same story is also told of Philip II (Plut., *Apophth. reg.* 31, 179c), Demetrius (Plut., *Dem.* 42, 909c) and Antipater (Stob. xiii.28)).

<sup>6</sup> Suet., *Tib.* 8.2.

<sup>7</sup> Pliny, *NH* xxxiv.62.

<sup>8</sup> Suet., *Tib.* 45.

<sup>9</sup> On Tiberius' relations with the people, see now Yavetz, *Plebs and Princes*, 103-13.



Pliny's (somewhat idealized) account of Trajan's gladiatorial games:

Requests were granted, unspoken wishes were anticipated, and he did not hesitate to press us urgently to make fresh demands; yet still there was something new to surpass our dreams. How freely too the spectators could express their enthusiasm and show their preferences without fear.<sup>1</sup>

No less illuminating, when refusing petitions emperors were evidently expected to offer an explanation or justification of their refusal, even in the most (apparently) trifling cases. For example, when asked to manumit a charioteer, Hadrian replied that it was not proper for him to free another man's slave.<sup>2</sup> Marcus refused repeated requests to free the trainer of a man-eating lion because (he said) he did not approve of what the man had taught his pet.<sup>3</sup> When the people clamoured incessantly 'in all the theatres and circuses' for the head of Tigellinus Galba justified his refusal to comply by issuing a statement weakly (and falsely) alleging that Tigellinus would soon be dead of consumption anyway.<sup>4</sup> A long exchange is reported between Claudius and a theatre audience concerning the whereabouts of the pantomime Mnester (popularly believed to have been closeted at the time with the Empress Messalina). In order to convince the crowd that he really did not know where Mnester was, Claudius was reduced to swearing a public oath.<sup>5</sup> When Augustus was faced with a demonstration from the equites against his law encouraging marriage, he replied by 'sending for the children whom his grand-daughter Agrippina had borne to Germanicus, and publicly displayed them, some sitting on his own knee, the rest on their father's—and made it quite clear by his affectionate looks and gestures that it would not be at all a bad thing if the knights imitated that young man's example.'<sup>6</sup>

Now for the behaviour of the 'bad' emperors. In 32 'much wilder demands than usual were made of the emperor in the

<sup>1</sup> *Paneg.* 33.2–3 (transl. B. Radice).

<sup>2</sup> *Dio* lxix.16.3.

<sup>3</sup> *Dio* lxxi.29.4. cf. in general *Digest* xl.9.17.1, 'divus Marcus prohibuit ex adclamatione populi manumittere'.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch, *Galba* 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Dio* lx.28.3f.

<sup>6</sup> Suet., *Aug.* 34 (translated by Robert Graves).

theatre' about the price of corn. Tiberius (who was evidently unable or unwilling to lower or fix the price as he had in 19) brought pressure to bear on the senate and consuls to curb such behaviour, but issued no pronouncement himself. However, 'his silence was not taken for modesty, as he had hoped, but for arrogance'.<sup>1</sup> If he could not oblige his people, the least an emperor could do was tell them himself.

Gaius provides several further examples. When asked for one 'Tetrinius the bandit' (a gladiator he did not like), Gaius petulantly replied that all who asked for him were Tetrinii (i.e. bandits) themselves.<sup>2</sup> On another occasion when the people cheered for a performer he did not like, he made his famous wish 'that the Roman people had but one neck'. At this the people lost all interest in the games and began to clamour for Gaius' informers. Gaius refused to reply and left immediately for Campania.<sup>3</sup> These were not the ways of the *civilis princeps*. Years later Diocletian and Constantine likewise left Rome because they could not take the behaviour of the people,<sup>4</sup> but they were soldier-emperors, less accustomed perhaps to the traditions of the Roman circus. Later visitors were more careful. Constantius II was 'delighted by the banter of the people',<sup>5</sup> and Theodosius I exchanged jibes with them in the best tradition.<sup>6</sup> But Theodosius' spoilt son Honorius was not up to the role, and he too left the city in haste and dudgeon.<sup>7</sup>

Domitian's behaviour is particularly instructive. When asked at the Capitoline games to pardon a man he had expelled from the senate, he refused to reply and ordered the crowd through a herald to be silent.<sup>8</sup> Such contempt for what were evidently the established courtesies of the ritual caused great offence. Years later, an emperor who usually managed to be on good terms with the people, Hadrian, in a similar fit of impatience

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* vi.13.

<sup>2</sup> Suet., *Calig.* 30.2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; Dio lix.13.7.

<sup>4</sup> Lactantius, *de morte persec.* 17; Zosimus, iv.30.1.

<sup>5</sup> Ammianus, xvi.10.13.

<sup>6</sup> 'alternos cum plebe iocos', Claudian *VI Cons. Hon.* 60f.

<sup>7</sup> Theophanes, p. 76.20 de Boor; Malalas, p. 349.12, with my *Claudian*, p. 384.

<sup>8</sup> Suet., *Dom.* 13.1 (quoted without comment as an illustration of his 'arrogantia'). It should be added, however, that Domitian put a lot of effort and money into his games (cf. Suet., *Dom.* 4), and the black reputation he enjoyed with our senatorial sources should not deceive us into supposing he was equally unpopular with the people. Juvenal iv.153-4 is a notoriously false explanation of his fall.

ordered his herald to give what Dio, writing a century later still, calls 'that famous reply of Domitian, "silence"'.<sup>1</sup> The herald lifted his arm and, as the crowd fell silent in expectation, instead of delivering the proclamation he simply said 'that's what he wants' (τοῦτο θέλει). Hadrian was delighted.

Indeed, it seems that the use of a herald was in itself an unpopular means of communication. Dio quotes as an illustration of Claudius' *savoir-faire* at the games the way he used heralds seldom, circulating his replies on tablets or placards wherever possible.<sup>2</sup> We may compare Plutarch's comment on Flamininus' proclamation of the freedom of the Greeks: 'Nero again in our own time . . . declared the Greeks free and independent, except that Titus proclaimed it by means of a herald, while Nero mounted on a platform in the market place and made the announcement himself.'<sup>3</sup> On the famous occasion when Androclus was spared by his lion, the decision of the emperor (? Claudius) to free both was taken after the facts of the case had been made known in this way.<sup>4</sup> To soften the blow of a refused petition Hadrian circulated an explanation in writing.<sup>5</sup>

The herald was impersonal (though perhaps better than no reply at all), a tablet written perhaps in the emperor's own hand the height of courtesy. Of course there will have been many requests so straightforward that the emperor could make his attitude clear by word or gesture alone.<sup>6</sup> Hence the frequency of references to gesture, as (for example) in the reply of Augustus just quoted. The theatrical presentation of Germanicus' family perhaps owes something to the time-honoured tradition of Roman forensic histrionics, but at the same time it was the most effective way of putting across his point to an audience most of whom could not have heard him (at least in a circus) and would yet appreciate a personal response.

It may be that by the later Empire the feeling against heralds was waning. Despite Dio's remarks on the subject, the 'good' Emperor Alexander Severus under whom he wrote is reported to have used a herald when replying favourably to a complaint

<sup>1</sup> τοῦτο δὴ τὸ τοῦ Δομιτιανοῦ, Σιωπήσατε, Dio lxix.6.

<sup>2</sup> lx.13.

<sup>3</sup> Tit. Flam. 12.13.

<sup>4</sup> Apion, ap. Gellius, NA v.14.29 = FGrH 616 F5.

<sup>5</sup> διὰ πινακίου γραφῆς, Dio lxix.16.3.

<sup>6</sup> For a good example, note the popular reply by gesture described by Martial, *De Spect.* 20.

about corn prices.<sup>1</sup> Gallienus too is reported to have communicated with amphitheatre audiences through a herald.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, our evidence suggests that emperors normally (if not invariably) addressed circus and theatre audiences through heralds, certainly at Constantinople. The great dialogue between Justinian and the Greens in 532 was conducted on Justinian's part through a *mandator*, and there are references to fifth- and sixth-century emperors issuing *mandata* to circus audiences<sup>3</sup> or speaking to them through a silentiary or *libellensis*.<sup>4</sup> Maurice in 602 was content to have an announcement designed to win him popular support at a crucial moment made through heralds.<sup>5</sup>

If there really was a change in practice here between the early and late Empire, we would have another respect in which relations between emperor and people at the games grew less, not more close in the late Empire.<sup>6</sup>

Seen in this perspective, the behaviour of the fifth- and sixth-century emperors to circus crowds is by no means as deferential as has usually been assumed. It has been argued that the people

<sup>1</sup> *SHA Alex.* 22.7; probably not true (T. D. Barnes, *Bonner HA Colloquium* 1968/69 (1970), 34f.), but none the less interesting for that; see p. 176, n.2.

<sup>2</sup> *SHA Gall.* 12.

<sup>3</sup> Justin II *ἔπεμψε μανδάτα* to the *μέρη* (Theophanes, p. 243.5); Tiberius II *ἔπεμψε μανδάτον, λέγων* (Theophanes, p. 249.26); cf. Corippus, *Laud. Just.* ii.333 (Justin II), 'haec plebi mandata dedit'; Malalas, *Exc. de Insid.* p. 175.27, *δηλώσας διὰ σιλεντιαρίου μανδάτα*; Malalas, p. 352, *ἔπεμψεν αὐτοῖς μανδάτα διὰ τοῦ πρωτοκούρσορος*, with which cf. Theophanes, p. 294.18, *πέμψας δὲ τὸν πρωτοκούρσορα αὐτοῦ ἡρώτα* . . .

<sup>4</sup> *διὰ λιβελλησίων* (*De Caer.* 418.21), the proclamation of Anastasius; again at 429.13f., the proclamation of Justin I. Leo I made an address at his coronation *διὰ τοῦ λιβελλαρίου* (*Caer.* 411.22), where Vogt, *Comm. ad loc.* (ii.127) and Treitinger (*Oström. Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, 9) assume an official called the *libellarius*. Yet there is no other evidence for such an official, whereas there is plenty for the application of the word to books or documents (cf. Souter, *Glossary of Late Latin*, s.v.); cf. especially *Caer.* 429.13f., where it is a *λιβελλάριον* (the proclamation) that the *libellenses* read. Surely we should assume the same in Leo's case; that is to say, he may have read the proclamation himself—though since he was crowned at the Hebdomon (outside the city) before his troops alone, this would prove nothing for hippodrome practice. When *De Caer.* 507.7 describes Theophilus as *δημηγορήσας ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ*, this presumably means that, exceptionally, he was not using a spokesman (cf. *De Caer.* 495.18, for the emperor greeting a deputation *ἀπὸ στόματος*, again with the implication of a personal address which was unusual).

<sup>5</sup> Simocatta, viii.7.8.

<sup>6</sup> For a parallel development, cf. the fact that by the fourth century (at least) the emperors no longer presented prizes to victorious performers in person; cf. Porphyrius, pp. 44, 276.



(‘represented’ by the factions) became so powerful that the emperors were obliged, not only to listen to their petitions and protests, but even to grant them an actual juridical status. That is to say, it has been maintained that the people of Constantinople earned *legal* rights denied to their cringing, demoralized forerunners in Rome<sup>1</sup>. We shall return to this topic in Ch. X; for the moment it will suffice to observe that, contrary to what the traditional view would seem to require, the early Byzantine emperors regularly treated circus protests with an arrogance and contempt that would have astonished and outraged a Roman crowd.

If we look at the dialogue between Justinian and the Greens without any preconceptions, we can hardly fail to be struck by his intolerant dismissal of their every complaint<sup>2</sup> (hardly a ‘negotiation’). Nor is there any reason to suppose this an untypical case. Very few records of actual circus petitions from fifth- to seventh-century Constantinople have come down to us—itself a fact of some significance—but all those that have got similarly short shrift (pp. 285f.).

We are not here concerned with the question whether the later emperors *ought* to have acted differently, whether on social, moral, political, or purely practical grounds. But it is clear that they *could* have acted differently, at least to the extent of offering a justification or explanation of their refusal before sending in troops. It may be that by the fifth century such tactics had been deliberately abandoned as ineffective rather than simply disdained by the autocrats of the Byzantine world; that, given the unruly behaviour of the factions, an early display of force had proved itself the best policy. Yet the fact itself remains; for whatever reasons and with whatever justification, emperors no longer paid circus protests the respect and attention shown by their predecessors at Rome.

Thus far two normal and regular features of the relationship between emperor and people as manifested in the theatre and circus—features arising naturally from the fact that they regularly met face to face in such an atmosphere.

But before proceeding to the more violent popular disturbances of the early imperial circuses and theatres, demonstrations

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 288–9.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix C.

which go way beyond the limits of such permitted licences as formal petitions from the people and double entendres from the stage, let us consider why it is that the emperors not only tolerated but in effect positively encouraged such manifestations. It was not inevitable that they should have behaved thus. To say that it was a long-established tradition may be true; but it is hardly an explanation.

The emperors could, for example, simply have stopped attending the games. Or they could have removed themselves more decisively from such popular pressures by retiring to a Versailles (something of the sort did happen eventually, when court was moved to Ravenna early in the fifth century). But by the mere act of regularly and frequently attending the games, they automatically put themselves in a vulnerable position: either they granted the petitions they had encouraged by their very presence, or they solicited unpopularity by refusing.

Why then did they attend? Three basic reasons may be suggested:

(1) It is in the nature of things that our sources tend to record cases where an emperor was booed in the circus or theatre. *That* was news. In reality it was here more than anywhere that he normally expected to be *cheered*.

It was because the silence that greeted Caesar's entry into the theatre was exceptional that Cicero mentioned it in his letter of July 59. The normal reaction was for the audience to rise to its feet and applaud when popular heroes or (later) the emperor or some member of his family entered the games.<sup>1</sup> It will hardly be necessary to document the countless occasions when emperors (again following republican tradition) gave special games to celebrate victories and anniversaries; naturally they will have been able to count on particularly grateful demonstrations of loyalty on occasions such as these. From an early date there had been a tendency to localize marks of honour paid to prominent citizens in the theatre and circus. For example, a man awarded the *corona civica* might wear it in the circus, where he had a special seat.<sup>2</sup> Pompey, like Aemilius Paullus, was

<sup>1</sup> 'i nunc, tolle animos et tecum finge triumphos / stantiaque in plausum tota theatra iuvent', Propertius iii.18.17-18; 'in venerationem tui theatra ipsa consurgent', Pliny, *Pan.* 54.2; Horace, *Odes* i.20.3; Suet., *Aug.* 56.2; Lucan, vii.18 etc.

<sup>2</sup> S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (1972), 163.



allowed to wear the *toga picta*, normally restricted to triumphs, and a gold crown in the circus; a *toga praetexta* and laurel wreath at the theatre.<sup>1</sup> An ivory statue of Caesar was carried in the *pompa circensis*. From probably the time of Sulla distinguished men were allowed a *sella curulis* in the theatre; from the period of Caesar's dictatorship we find the even more obviously Greek practice of placing an empty chair in the theatre for a dead or absent hero.<sup>2</sup> The development of what has with some justification been called a regular 'imperial liturgy' of the circus will be discussed in Ch. IX.

At the theatre, plays might be deliberately written (or revived) for their relevance to imperial achievements and policies, just as in republican times Accius' *Brutus* (written about L. Brutus the regicide in honour of D. Brutus c. 138) was pointedly performed during Cicero's exile and seemingly intended for the *ludi Apollinares* of 44 by M. Brutus the tyrannicide.<sup>3</sup> Pliny's account of Trajan's alleged reform of the theatre implies a considerable degree of propagandist exploitation under Domitian:<sup>4</sup>

Could any spot remain ignorant of the lamentable spirit of adulation in the country, when tribute to the emperors was paid in the form of shows and riotous entertainment . . . But the scandal was that everything was approved in the senate as well as on the stage, through consul and actor alike. You [namely Trajan] cut out all these stage performances from honours paid to you. Thus serious poetry and the everlasting glory of our historic past pay you tribute in place of a moment's disgraceful publicity; furthermore, the whole theatre audience will rise to show its respect with all the more unanimity now that the stage is to say less of you.

There is little direct evidence for what was evidently too normal to evoke comment,<sup>5</sup> but in view of the many hostile double entendres from the stage quoted above, it will be appropriate to add one favourable example to redress the balance. Under Augustus once the people burst into applause at the line 'O

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 271-2.

<sup>2</sup> Weinstock, 'The Image and Chair of Germanicus', *JRS* xlvii (1957), 146f., *passim* for honours of this sort.

<sup>3</sup> Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, 146-7, with p. 159 above.

<sup>4</sup> *Pan.* 54 (translated, as in subsequent quotations by Betty Radice).

<sup>5</sup> Though cf. Phaedrus v.7.25f., 'tunc chorus ignotum modo reducto canticum / insonuit, cuius haec fuit sententia: / "laetare, incolumis Roma, salvo principe".'

dominum aequum et bonum',<sup>1</sup> much to his (professed) embarrassment.

Acts likely to be popular or designed to win favour or support could be given the maximum publicity if performed in the theatre or circus. Titus, for example, had informers arrested and paraded in the Colosseum, as later did Trajan.<sup>2</sup> It was of course an old-established Roman practice to throw criminals and prisoners to the beasts. Valentinian I went one better; he had the hated eunuch chamberlain Rhodanus burnt alive in the hippodrome of Constantinople<sup>3</sup>—not the last human bonfire to delight a Byzantine circus audience. In later times deposed emperors or usurpers were regularly mutilated in the hippodrome by their successors. It was here that an old emperor would parade his future heirs to ensure a smooth and popular succession; here that a new emperor would make his all-important first public appearance, in a carefully calculated pageant of promises and concessions. Victory celebrations, even imperial coronations, would take place in the hippodrome. At the other end of the scale, soldiers who had dishonoured the Roman name were made to parade there in female dress. There too that under the Iconoclasts monks were publicly humiliated, and on one occasion forced to marry nuns.<sup>4</sup>

Anastasius, in danger of losing his throne in a desperate riot, chanced all by appearing in the Kathisma without his diadem and threatening to abdicate. The crowd was shocked into silence, and he won the day.<sup>5</sup> Anastasius was no stranger to such histrionics; not content with simply abolishing the detested chrysarguron tax in 498, he had all the relevant files burned in the hippodrome.<sup>6</sup> So dramatic a touch was too good not to repeat; on his first appearance in the hippodrome in 565 Justin publicly repaid all debts incurred by his predecessor, and then burned the I.O.U.s in celebration.<sup>7</sup> Constantine V brilliantly exploited the hippodrome in his campaign against the monks, whipping up popular rage against them by skilfully

<sup>1</sup> Suet., *Aug.* 53.1.

<sup>2</sup> Suet., *Titus* 8.5; Pliny, *Pan.* 34.

<sup>3</sup> Malalas 339 Bonn, *Exc. de Virt. et Vit.* i.161, and garbled Suda quotations (cf. *CR* 1963, 264).

<sup>4</sup> There is a good anthology of such happenings in Guiland, *BS* xxvii (1966) 302f. and xxviii (1967), 262f.

<sup>5</sup> Bury, *Later Roman Empire* i.439.

<sup>6</sup> Priscian, *Pan. Anast.* 162f.

<sup>7</sup> Corippus. *Laud. Just.* ii.381f.

planted and presented *agents provocateurs*.<sup>1</sup> Much earlier, Titus had planted stooges in theatre audiences to clamour for the arrest of men he wanted out of the way.<sup>2</sup> And at a much more mundane level, we may without undue cynicism guess that when announcements were made there about the price and availability of corn and wine, the government would often have foreseen the request and carefully calculated how far they could go, so that the emperor could present what concessions were possible in the most favourable light.

It is of course a time-honoured device of the dictator to exploit his subjects' loyalty at mass celebrations—but normally on occasions of his own choosing. The difference—and danger—at Rome was that from time to time circumstances might evoke a less favourable reaction from the people. But this was no doubt sufficiently uncommon to make the price well worth while.

(2) Provided that it did not get out of hand (and in the early empire there were normally police provisions adequate to ensure that it did not), even a hostile demonstration could ease a difficult situation. A grievance aired, even if fruitlessly, is a grievance halved. Imagine the tension the first time Nero entered the theatre after the murder of Agrippina. A joke against him (like the one quoted above), if tolerated, could help to defuse indignation that, if suppressed, might have smouldered and grown to explode in a much more dangerous way. The emperor who allowed the people to get away with murder in the theatre was seldom troubled by real plots.<sup>3</sup> It is at any rate suggestive that those who suppressed such verbal treason most harshly—Gaius and Domitian—eventually succumbed to the real thing. It was scarcely freedom of speech in the true sense, since it did not extend to the upper classes (who had to be much more careful what they said). But the people were not likely to mind if the heads of their betters rolled so long as they felt that they could say what they liked. An emperor's less popular ministers might have had more cause for anxiety; emperors

<sup>1</sup> Steph. Diac., *V. Steph. Iunioris*, PG c.1132f. See pp. 302–4.

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, *Titus* 6.1.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the saying attributed to Frederick the Great: 'My people and I have come to an understanding. They are to say what they like and I am to do what I like.'

were not above diverting the people's indignation with a scapegoat.<sup>1</sup> At a more modest level, circus and theatre complaints could provide an emperor with useful information, even if he was unable (or unwilling) to act upon it at the time. If he could show himself thick-skinned enough, a prudent emperor could derive the same sort of lessons from the theatre or circus as a modern politician does from the popular press or public opinion polls—favourable or unfavourable. This was exactly how Cicero had treated them.

The games themselves could serve as a safety valve. Genuine grievances (about a tax, a corn shortage, a minister) would tend to be dissipated in the excitement and resentments of the races. The great pantomime Pylades, reproached by Augustus for a quarrel with another dancer, is said to have replied: "You are ungrateful, sire; it is to your advantage that the people should devote their spare time to us."<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to believe that Pylades was telling Augustus (of all people) something he did not already know. Juvenal's famous aphorism about bread and circuses was of course bitterly ironic.<sup>3</sup> Less attention has been paid to Fronto's fuller and entirely favourable statement of the same point, in a letter to L. Verus:<sup>4</sup>

The Emperor [sc. Trajan] did not neglect even actors and the other performers of the stage, the circus, or the amphitheatre, knowing as he did that the Roman people are held fast by two things above all, the corn-dole and the shows; that the success of a government depends on amusements as much as more serious things; neglect of serious matters entails the greater loss, neglect of amusements the greater discontent; food largesse is a weaker incentive than shows; by largesses of food only the proletariat on the corn register are conciliated singly and individually, whereas by the shows the whole population is kept in good humour.

There can be little doubt that, not least among their functions, the games did indeed divert popular attention from what, for

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> A combination of the slightly different versions in Dio liv. 17.5 and Macrobius, *Sat.* ii. 7.19 (with Marinone's note).

<sup>3</sup> *Sat.* x. 81. Not original (it seems) with Juvenal and Rome; according to Dio of Prusa, it was well known that the people of Alexandria cared for nothing but 'plenty of bread and a race-meeting' (*Or.* xxxii. 31).

<sup>4</sup> *Princ. Hist.* 17 (ii. 217 Loeb ed.).



most, were the grim and tedious realities of everyday life in Rome.

(3) The ideology of the early Empire has attracted much attention of late. Yet of all the virtues (real and imaginary) credited at different times to different emperors,<sup>1</sup> perhaps the most important yet the least discussed is his *civilitas*.<sup>2</sup> It is a commonplace of imperial panegyric to contrast Rome, where a *princeps* governed free men, with Parthia, where a despot ruled over slaves. And nowhere did the emperor take more pains to appear first citizen among his fellows than at the games. If he could but master the popular touch, there he could be his own propaganda incarnate.

This great truth was early seen and exploited by Augustus, profiting from an error of Caesar. For Caesar, as Augustus himself (significantly enough) used to relate, was criticized for dealing with his correspondence while watching the games.<sup>3</sup> Augustus was careful to do nothing but watch.

It is interesting to see that exactly the same reproach was levelled at another conscientious ruler, Marcus Aurelius.<sup>4</sup> Both Marcus and Caesar recognized their duty to attend the games, but could not bring themselves to abandon all their other duties for days on end. For we must remember that festivals sometimes lasted for a week or more, and as early as Augustus 77 days a year were wholly given over to public games—a total that by the fourth century had risen to 177.<sup>5</sup> No responsible ruler could afford (whatever his inclination) to give up this much time to public relations. Even Augustus would 'absent himself from a show for several hours, sometimes for several days' (whence it would appear that several days' attendance would have been considered desirable), but to avoid offence he always sent his apologies ('petita venia')—and a substitute too.<sup>6</sup> Gaius also sent a deputy when unable to be present, often his uncle Claudius.<sup>7</sup> Thus the principle was established that a representative of the imperial family should normally attend

<sup>1</sup> Syme, *Tacitus* ii (1958), 754 (an 'engaging topic').

<sup>2</sup> Only a page even in J. Béranger, *Recherches sur l'aspect idéologique du principat* (1953), 151, going no further than the texts quoted in *Thes. Ling. Lat. s.v. civilis, civilitas*. See now I. Lana, *Atti Acc. Sc. Torino* 1972, 465f.

<sup>3</sup> Suetonius, *Aug.* 45.1.

<sup>4</sup> *HA Marc.* 15.1.

<sup>5</sup> Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, p. 248.

<sup>6</sup> Suet., *Aug.* 45.1.

<sup>7</sup> Suet., *Claud.* 7.

at any rate the major festivals. Julian caused grave offence at Antioch (by then an imperial capital) when he openly flouted the conventions:<sup>1</sup>

I hate horse-races as debtors the market-place. So I seldom attend, only during festivals of the gods, and I do not stay all day as my cousin [Constantius II, a stickler for protocol] used to do, and my uncle [count Julian] and my brother [Gallus Caesar]. Six races are all that I watch at most, and not even them with the air of one who loves the thing . . .

Emperors were normally praised rather than blamed for attending the theatre too,<sup>2</sup> despite its low moral tone, and those in need of popular support took care to be seen there.<sup>3</sup> Theodosius I spent the day before he died at the circus.<sup>4</sup> By the developed Byzantine period the emperor was clearly bound by the sternest etiquette to participate in all the important festivals.

But the terms on which the emperor attended changed somewhat between Augustus and Theodosius, as did the notion of *civilitas*. Augustus used to watch from what was called the *pulvinar*, an open couch big enough to take all his family.<sup>5</sup> Gaius preferred to watch from the front row<sup>6</sup> (hence the *pulvinar* was

<sup>1</sup> *Misopogon* 340A.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. *HA Alex. Sev.* xlv.7, notoriously a work of almost total fiction, but significant for our purpose in as much as it presents an idealized biography of the perfect emperor.

<sup>3</sup> Dio lxxv.7.1 (Vitellius), lxxiv.14.1 (Didius Julianus), and for Arcadius' ambitious chamberlain Eutropius see Claudian, *In Eutrop.* ii.341f. and J. F. D'Alton, *Selections from St. John Chrysostom* (1940), 277.5, 278.16f.

<sup>4</sup> Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* v.26.

<sup>5</sup> Despite P. Mingazzini, 'Il "pulvinar ad circum"', *Bull. com.* lxxii (1946-8), 27-32, I still incline to see the *pulvinar* of Suet. *Aug.* 45 ('ipse circenses ex amicorum fere libertinorumque cenaculis spectabat, interdum ex pulvinari et quidem cum coniuge ac liberis sedens') and *Claud.* 4 ('spectare eum [sc. Claudius] circenses ex pulvinari non placet nobis [Augustus]; *expositus* enim in fronte prima spectaculorum *conspicietur*') as a circus seat of some sort. The 'pulvinar ad circum' of *Res Gestae* 19 (ναὸν πρὸς τῷ μεγ. ἵπποδρόμῳ in the Greek version) must indeed be an altar or the like, connected with *lectisternia*, for which many parallels can be cited. But how can the *pulvinar* of the two Suetonius passages quoted above be so understood—unless (as may well be the case) Augustus' seat was situated immediately by the altar? At all events, it seems clear that it was from here that members of Augustus' family normally watched.

<sup>6</sup> Dio lix.7.4; Gaius did not give the signal to the charioteers himself (?from the *pulvinar*), but watched ἐκ προέδρας [read προεδρίας] with his sisters and fellow priests. A. Piganiol, *Byzantion* xi (1936), 384 was surely wrong to interpret 'il déserta la tribune officielle pour la loge des *praesidentes*', by which he means the box situated above the *carceres*. προεδρία refers to the seats of honour at the very front,



presumably further back than this). In the amphitheatre Nero sat in a box (*cubiculum*), and often watched through barely opened shutters, as did Domitian. Trajan did away with or at least did not use the *pulvinar*, a popular move according to an instructive passage of the younger Pliny:<sup>2</sup> 'Caesar as spectator shares the public seats as he does the spectacle. Thus your subjects will be able to look on you in their turn; they will be permitted to see not just the emperor's box, but their emperor himself, seated among his people.' If this was the ideal of *civilitas* under the Principate, things were to change drastically by the fourth century. We need only look at the four times repeated relief on the base to the obelisk of Theodosius (an official monument), where an impassive emperor gazes serenely down from his box, towering above the tiny spectators,<sup>3</sup> to realize that we have exchanged a *princeps* sitting amongst his fellows for an autocrat favouring his subjects with the sacred presence.

The older tradition continued for longer in Rome than in the other, especially eastern capitals of the late empire.<sup>4</sup> We have already seen how careful Constantius II and Theodosius were to act the *civilis princeps* during their Roman visits of 357 and 389, above all at the games.<sup>5</sup> The poet Claudian reveals the consciously propagandist nature of imperial behaviour during these brief trips by his blatant portrayal of the same emperor in all the trappings of the Byzantine Basileus at his by then permanent western capital in Milan.<sup>6</sup>

In the East, *civilitas* was not a virtue that had been much associated with rulers. The word itself had no Greek equivalent. The historian Eutropius used it several times of emperors in his mid-fourth-century *Breviarium*; the almost contemporary Greek translation of Paeonius glosses the word *δημαγωγός*<sup>7</sup>—perhaps a cynical judgement of what *civilitas* really amounted to, more probably through simple ignorance that in the western tradition it was a standing imperial virtue. It is interesting to compare by a long-standing tradition reserved especially for priests (cf. LSJ s.v. or Pickard-Cambridge, *Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup> (1968), 268f.); on Roman practice, see Alföldi, *Röm. Mitt.* 1935, 42.

<sup>1</sup> Suetonius, *Nero* 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Pan.* 51.4–5 (Radice).

<sup>3</sup> *Porphyrius*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Straub, *Vom Herrscherideal in der Spätantike* (1959), 187f.

<sup>5</sup> p. 166.

<sup>6</sup> See my *Claudian*, 382f., and for the emperor at Milan add Ambrose, *Expos. in Ps.* cxviii.8.19.

<sup>7</sup> *Eutrop.*, i.9.1; vii.21.2; 8.2; 8.4. Note however that, according to Dio (lix.3.1), Gaius was at first *δημοκρατικώτατος*.

with the passages from Pliny's panegyric on Trajan quoted above some passages from Dio of Prusa, addressing the same emperor on the same subject, kingship: Dio advises Trajan not 'to flatter the unprofitable and unarmed masses', or 'to covet the praise of the vulgar . . . but only that of the free-born and noble'; the emperor should not ignore petitions, of course, but his response to them is unmistakably described in terms appropriate to a god graciously granting his worshippers' prayers.<sup>1</sup> By the fourth century the supreme imperial virtue had become *philanthropia*, which was ultimately to merge with the even more paternalistic *eleemosyne*, charity. The emperor cared for his people, but as a shepherd looks after his flock rather than a *princeps* his fellow citizens. Byzantine emperors took their responsibility for the material welfare of their subjects far more seriously than their Roman predecessors; the poor, the old, and the sick were almost certainly better off in Byzantine times.<sup>2</sup> But such aid was both given and received, quite unashamedly, as alms.

Confrontations between emperor and people continued as before; indeed they came to assume an even greater importance in Byzantine times. But it was no longer either necessary or even appropriate to use the circus to exploit the *civilitas* of a ruler who owed his throne to God, not men. Professions of equality with the masses, even an unassuming manner (as Julian discovered),<sup>3</sup> from a late Roman emperor would have astonished a crowd long accustomed to the ways of a *dominus*. Thus those who assume or argue that a less paternalistic relationship between emperor and people first developed in the late empire (the traditional view) can hardly be aware what a paradoxical and *prima facie* improbable claim they are making.

But there is one aspect of the emperor's *civilitas* which did endure from the Julio-Claudians to the house of Heraclius—and

<sup>1</sup> *Orat.* i.28, 33, 41 (ἱκέσιος δὲ ὡς ἂν ἐπήκοός τε καὶ ἴλεως τοῖς δεομένοις).

<sup>2</sup> G. Downey, 'Philanthropia in Religion and Statecraft in the Fourth Century after Christ', *Historia* iv (1955), 199f.; H. Hunger, *Prooimion; Elemente der byz. Kaiseridee in den Arengen der Urkunden* (Wien. Byz. Stud. i, 1968), 143f.; see too L. J. Daly, 'The Mandarin and the Barbarian', *Historia* xxi (1972), 351f. and D. J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (1968), a useful collection of material, but wholly ignoring the Roman roots, leaping straight from Isocrates and Saint Paul to Byzantium.

<sup>3</sup> *Amm. Marc.* xxii.7.1 ('laudabant alii, quidam ut affectatum et vile carpebant').

perhaps even down to the Crusades. Byzantinists, cut off from a Roman perspective, have found it impossible to believe that an emperor could concern himself with anything so seemingly trivial as a circus colour for its own sake. Hence (as we have seen) they infer that such imperial partisanship, which are undeniable, must have some deeper significance. They are right, of course, to be dissatisfied with the eloquent simplicity of Rambaud:<sup>1</sup> 'Hélas, l'empereur byzantin était, lui aussi, un byzantin.' Many Byzantine emperors, like some of their Roman predecessors, may indeed have had a passion for the races (Michael III, Commodus, Nero); but this is not the only reason they declared their passion openly.

It was Augustus (as we have seen) who saw that the emperor must not only attend the games, but enjoy them as well. Yet how could he be seen to enjoy them in the same way as his fellow citizens if he did not directly share their partisanship? We do not happen to know which colour Augustus himself favoured but Gaius and Nero were ardent Greens.

If it was a duty that came easily to some emperors, this does not mean that they were unaware of what would now be called the public relations aspect of their behaviour. Nor was it always quite so easy or popular a thing as might have been imagined. Titus used to gesture and argue vigorously with the crowd about the merits of the 'Thracian' style of gladiature.<sup>2</sup> This was fine, just what ordinary citizens did. But when ordinary citizens got excited, as they usually did at the games, they were liable to turn to abuse, if not blows. Clearly the emperor must be careful not to behave too much like an ordinary citizen in this respect. And the moment he attempted (as was only too obviously in his power) to intervene unfairly in (say) a disputed decision, or to silence fans who booed his own favourite charioteer or gladiator, then he had undermined the whole principle of *civilitas*. Such, alas, were the ways of Gaius and Domitian. L. Verus, unlike his sober brother Marcus, favoured the Greens so scandalously that he was constantly abused by the Blues<sup>3</sup>—an undignified spectacle. Such genuine enthusiasm for the games could be a dangerous thing in an emperor. Caracalla was once so infuriated by jeers at his favourite charioteer that, outdoing all predecessors,

<sup>1</sup> *Revue des deux mondes* 1871, 764.

<sup>2</sup> Suetonius, *Dom.* 10.1.

<sup>3</sup> *HA Verus* vi.2.

he set soldiers on the offending spectators: since 'it was impossible to find the culprits among so many . . . the soldiers arrested and destroyed anyone they came across indiscriminately'—doing little good to the reputation of Caracalla.<sup>1</sup> Arrian has preserved for us a little lecture by Epictetus on the topic.<sup>2</sup> A procurator of Epirus who had shown outrageous favours to a particular actor (?pantomime), complained to the philosopher of the abuse he had received from the crowd. 'Why, what harm', said Epictetus, 'have the people done? They have favoured an actor, which is just what you did.' 'Is this a proper manner, then, of expressing their favour?' 'Seeing you, their governor and the friend and vice-gerent of Caesar, express it thus, was it not to be expected that they would express it thus too? . . . For whom have the many to imitate but you, their superiors?' Cassiodorus offered similar advice to a prefect of Rome four centuries later.<sup>3</sup>

The emperor who would be truly *civilis* had to tread a discreet middle path. Contrary to what is often assumed, the only Byzantine emperor on record as showing *unfair* favours to his own colour is Justinian—and then only in the period before the Nika riot. The only emperor we know of who, for reasons of policy, deliberately withheld his favour from both Blues and Greens, could not risk appearing indifferent to the outcome of the races: *this* is why Anastasius supported the Reds.

Granted the existence of the tradition of personal appearance in the hippodrome and the various benefits to the emperor accruing therefrom, it is only natural that it should have continued so long as the emperors normally resided at Rome. But it might have seemed a likely casualty during the late-third-century anarchy. The emperors who succeeded each other with such indecent haste during this period may not have been the rough soldiers they are painted in the senatorial tradition, but they did have to spend most of their reigns battling with barbarians on the distant frontiers of the empire. Once things had settled down again under Diocletian and the tetrarchs, Rome found itself no longer *the* capital of its empire. New capitals sprang up wherever it happened to be convenient for the emperor of the day.

<sup>1</sup> Herodian iv.6.4–5.

<sup>2</sup> Epictetus, *Diss.* iii.4.1.

<sup>3</sup> *Variae* vi.4.6 (of 511).



Yet in every one of these capitals so far excavated (six out of seven), a hippodrome was built adjoining the imperial palace, evidently in direct imitation of the *domus Augustana/circus maximus* complex at Rome. For Diocletian at Antioch; for Maximian at Milan; for Galerius at Thessalonica and (as lately revealed) Sirmium; for Constantine at Trier and Constantinople.<sup>1</sup> No remains have yet been found at the seventh, Nicomedia, but since we know that Diocletian built a circus there,<sup>2</sup> we may reasonably assume a similar set-up. Not to be outdone by his colleagues, even Maxentius, short-lived ruler of Rome, built himself a second palace/circus complex there, off the *via Appia*.<sup>3</sup> A mid-fourth-century geographical treatise emanating from Syria, directly links the circuses at Antioch and Constantinople to the imperial presence there.<sup>4</sup>

We can hardly suppose that in each case the emperor in question was responding to local pressure for a suitable arena in which the people might present their petitions; still less that in each case the emperor was anxious to foster democratic sentiments on his own initiative. On the contrary it was not at all this aspect of the games, the one that has so impressed scholars today, that attracted the tetrarchs.

According to a no doubt oversimplified ancient tradition, it was Diocletian who transformed the Roman princeps into an oriental monarch. In fact, most of the 'oriental' elements in this transformation can be traced well back into the third century, but even so it can hardly be denied that the age of Diocletian marked a decisive and normative stage in the process of what German scholars have called the 'Absonderung' of the emperor, his elevation far above the level of ordinary mortals.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> For full bibliography on all these sites see Michael Vickers' study of the Thessalonica complex in *JRS* 1972, 25f. For information about the newly discovered Sirmium complex I am indebted to John Humphrey.

<sup>2</sup> *Expos. Tot. Mundi* 49, and cf. *Porphyrius*, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> A. Frazer, 'The Iconography of the Emperor Maxentius' Buildings in Via Appia', *The Art Bulletin* xlviii (1966), 382f.

<sup>4</sup> *Expos. Tot. Mundi*, 32 and 50. An anonymous Gallic panegyrist in the year 310 reckons Trier's 'circum maximum aemulum, credo, Romano' among the 'opera regia' of the city (*Pan. Lat.* vii (6) 22.5).

<sup>5</sup> See A. Alföldi, *Röm. Mitt.* 1934, 3f., and O. Treitinger, *Oström. Kaiser and Reichsidee* (1938), Ch. II. T. W. Africa, *J. Interdisc. Hist.* 1971, 20, takes the phrase 'voces populi non sunt audiendae' from an edict of Diocletian and Maximian (*Cod. Just.* ix.47.12) as an illustration of the growing despotism of the period. But the sequel, 'nec enim vocibus eorum credi oportet, quando aut obnoxium crimine

standardization of the palace/circus complex all over the empire is to be seen, I would suggest, as a concerted act of imperial policy; designed to foster, not (of course) democratic sentiments, but sentiments of loyalty and adoration towards the person of the emperor. In other words, what mattered to the tetrarchs was, no longer (3) above, the opportunity to display their *civilitas*; no longer even (2), the diversion of the people; but overwhelmingly (1), the glorification and consolidation of imperial power.

Scholars have sometimes remarked that the proximity of the palace to the circus provided the emperor with a quick getaway from the circus in the event of a riot. Such undignified exits were in fact exceedingly rare. The true reason was to make it quick and easy for the emperor to *enter* the circus, since he needed to go there so often. This uniform duplication of the circus/palace complex in every capital—often in areas where chariot-racing in the Roman style had till then been rare or non-existent<sup>1</sup>—is a particularly striking proof of the function the circus had by then come to occupy in Rome itself: a backdrop against which the emperor could act out in due pomp his role as divine ruler, victor in war, and provider of peace, plenty, and games. So effective and popular a part of the emperor's public *persona* had this performance become that a circus was evidently felt to be as indispensable to the itinerant tetrarchs as a palace.

Even outside the Roman world, presidency of the circus games was recognized as the most conspicuous symbol of its master's power and glory. When the Gothic king Totila recaptured Rome in 550, one of his first acts was to preside at the circus.<sup>2</sup> The Frankish kings regularly watched at the circus in another former imperial capital, Arles,<sup>3</sup> and Chilperich built circuses at Soissons and Paris.<sup>4</sup> The Persian King Chosroes held a circus race at Apamea after he had captured it in 540, favour-

*absolvi aut innocentem condemnari desideraverint* shows that the ruling is part of the developing legal distinction in punishment between *honestiores* and *humiliores* (see P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire*, 1970, 124–5). There is no necessary implication that 'voces populi' are to be disregarded in other matters; indeed (as we shall see below, p. 241), Constantine gave them a formal status.

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 201f.

<sup>2</sup> Procopius, *BG* iii (vii) 37.4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 33.5.

<sup>4</sup> Greg. Tur., *Hist. Franc.* v.17.



ing the Greens, since he had heard that Justinian favoured the Blues.<sup>1</sup> In 484 the Samaritan revolutionary leader Justasas captured Caesarea, and watched circus games there.<sup>2</sup> During another Samaritan revolt in 529, the self-styled Samaritan emperor, one Julian, again presided at circus games, this time in Neapolis.<sup>3</sup> Against this background we can better appreciate the Jewish midrash quoted on an earlier page: how else could a Byzantine Jew imagine so great and splendid a king as Solomon except in a circus?<sup>4</sup> We can also understand better why Constantius II was so appalled when his nephew and Caesar Gallus, whose loyalty he already suspected, visited Constantinople without warning or permission during Constantius' absence in 354 and gave games in the circus there. Rightly or wrongly, Constantius construed this usurpation of his own role as virtual public proof of treason, and within a matter of weeks he had Gallus removed from power and quietly executed.<sup>5</sup>

We come now to violent protests and riots. Our purpose is to compare the violence of the early Empire with that of the late Empire. But first a general point. This combination of frequent riots and a close relationship between ruler and ruled is by no means unique to ancient Rome.

The pattern has been brilliantly sketched by Eric Hobsbawm<sup>6</sup> on evidence from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Southern Europe, cities like Naples, Palermo, Vienna, and (even then) Rome and Constantinople, capital cities with a long tradition of direct rule by a resident prince or duke.

'In such cities', writes Hobsbawm,<sup>7</sup> 'the [people] lived in an odd relationship with its rulers, equally compounded of parasitism and riot'. It was the ruler's business to provide food and employment for his people. So long as he did this, he would receive their active and enthusiastic support. If he failed to provide, the people would simply riot until he did. Both sides knew

<sup>1</sup> Procopius, *BP* ii.11.32 (and cf. ii.14.1 on Chosroes' new Antioch).

<sup>2</sup> Malalas, p. 382.12, with Stein, *Bas-Empire* ii.31-2.

<sup>3</sup> Malalas, p. 446, with Stein, 287-8. A Christian was unlucky enough to win the first race—and lose his head.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 67. <sup>5</sup> Amm. Marc. xiv.11.12-13.

<sup>6</sup> *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*<sup>3</sup> (1973), ch. vii.

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.* 115.

exactly how far they could go, and provided the ruler did not default too long or too seriously, the people would always return to their allegiance. It was in their interest to do so, since normally they took a positive pride in identifying with the greatness and splendour of their prince. And the prince could afford to tolerate what by modern standards might seem an alarming number of riots because they never threatened the system; at bottom the people were a thoroughly conservative force. So satisfactory a means of negotiation did this prove at Parma down into this century that the people found it very difficult to adjust to trade unions.

It will, I think, be obvious that early imperial Rome is a classic illustration of this pattern. Except that this curious 'symbiosis' between ruler and ruled was even more highly developed at Rome, thanks to their regular personal confrontations at the games. Despite the complication of religious divisions, even the Byzantine mob was normally devoted to its emperor. In fact (as we shall see), least of all were the factions of Constantinople his enemies, despite the frequency and violence of their rioting.

If we are to make any sort of valid comparison between the early and late Empire in this respect, we must be absolutely clear about the different character of our sources for the two periods. It cannot be emphasized enough that over 90 per cent of our information about actual circus and theatre riots in the late Empire comes from the chronicles, works with a very different scope from histories proper with their narrowly Thucydidean focus on political and military history. The chronicles devote a quite disproportionate amount of space to popular disturbances, often recording the exact itinerary of a rioting crowd, the buildings burnt, and sometimes even supplying the identity of the casualties. Grateful though we must be for such detail, we must not make too much of the absence of similar information for the early Empire. The austere Tacitus, for example, shows little interest in such phenomena, and while his disciple Ammianus does accord them some space, he does so with evident distaste and even an apology.<sup>1</sup> When Tacitus mentions a theatre riot, it is usually because it led to a debate in

<sup>1</sup> On Ammianus' account of popular disturbances in fourth-century Rome, see H. P. Kohns, *Versorgungskrisen und Hungerrevolten in spätantiken Rom* (1961).

the Senate or an imperial edict. The more relaxed and gossipy Dio, on the other hand, both mentions them more often and allows them more significance. Reference back to the footnotes of this chapter will show that, even for the first century A.D., most of the relevant material comes from Suetonius and Dio.

It is not till the period *c.* 190–230, thanks to the more biographical than historical approach of Herodian in addition to the eye-witness closing portions of Dio, that we can begin to construct a regular sequence of popular disturbances to match those of the fifth or sixth century. This was a troubled period, to be sure, but it might be rash to infer too substantial an absolute increase over (say) the half-century 1–50 A.D.

The commonest sort of factional disturbance in the late Empire (as we shall see) is the battle between partisans after (less often during) a particularly contentious race meeting or (more often) pantomime show. In the early Empire, despite lack of detail, it is clear from the evidence collected in the next chapter (pp. 223–4) that riots arising directly out of pantomime shows were very common indeed. In the first and second centuries, just as in the fifth and sixth, the standard response of the government was to close theatres and exile dancers. As early as the year after Augustus' death we hear of battles between fans and soldiers, with many deaths on both sides<sup>1</sup>—a pattern that was to recur again and again over (at least) the next six centuries, at intervals which correspond, by and large, with the quality and coverage of our sources.

As for demonstrations rather than straightforward riots, that is to say genuine protests as distinct from mere hooliganism, there is an impressive series in the period between 190 and 238.

The first, in 190, culminated, as it was meant to, in the fall of the enormously wealthy praetorian prefect Cleander. Dio's precise account of the staging of this remarkable incident is worth quoting in full:<sup>2</sup>

It was a race day, and as the horses were about to contend for the seventh race, a crowd of children ran into the circus, led by a tall girl of grim appearance, who in view of what happened was subsequently reckoned to have been a goddess. The children chanted many terrible things in unison; then the people took up the cry, and

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* i.54.3.

<sup>2</sup> lxxxii.13.

shouted out every imaginable insult. Finally they leapt from their seats and set off to find Commodus (who was then in the Quintilian suburb), calling out many blessings on him and curses on Cleander.

Commodus was sufficiently daunted to have Cleander beheaded on the spot. Hardly a spontaneous popular outburst, of course. Dio alleges that Papirius Dionysius, the prefect of the corn supply, had been deliberately exploiting the corn shortage to discredit Cleander, and in the *mêlée* Cleander's praetorians had to fight the urban cohorts, who should have been under the command of the city prefect, the future emperor Pertinax.<sup>1</sup> The children must have prepared their contribution, and presumably they waited till the racing was well under way so that the crowd would be excited enough to join in. Yet the fact that it was no doubt carefully rigged in no way detracts from the significance of the affair. It would be naïve to assume that the Blues and Greens of the late empire were never manipulated in this way; it was almost certainly senatorial agents who diverted the Nika revolt of 532 into the ruin of the city and praetorian prefects. And there are many similar examples of demands for the death or deposition of ministers in the early empire. According to Herodian, there had been theatre protests against Cleander for some time before the fateful circus demonstration.<sup>2</sup> There were popular demands for the removal of Elagabalus' prefect Eubulus for some time before his murder in 222.<sup>3</sup> Similar protests about Tigellinus under Galba were referred to above; Tacitus records the final, successful demand for his head 'in the circus and theatres, where the mob can demonstrate with the greater impunity' under Otho.<sup>4</sup> Dio reports jibes at Severus' prefect Plautianus.<sup>5</sup> What is the difference between this sort of thing and the occasional clamour against city and praetorian prefects in the fifth and sixth centuries? On the contrary, the continuity of response on both sides is instructive—if predictable: it was always worth the people's while to demonstrate against bad or unpopular ministers, because there would usually come a time when the emperor was prepared to sacrifice the minister (who had outlived his usefulness) for a boost to his own popularity (note how careful the demonstrators of 190 were

<sup>1</sup> On the incident as a whole see Whittaker, *Historia* 1964, 348f., Cassola, *Par. del Pass.* 1965, 451f., and Birley, *Septimius Severus: the African Emperor* (1971), 128f.

<sup>2</sup> i.12.5.

<sup>3</sup> Dio lxxix.21.1.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist.* i.72.

<sup>5</sup> lxxvi.2.2-3.



to punctuate their denunciation of Cleander with praise of Commodus).

In 193 first Commodus then Pertinax were murdered; but Didius Julianus was unable to hold on to the succession he had won in the famous 'auction' by the praetorians, not least (it can be argued) because he totally failed to win the people of Rome, who worshipped Pertinax. For example, on Commodus' death, the people, having got hold of the idea that the praetorians would not acknowledge Pertinax, ran to the barracks to force them. Pertinax was in fact the candidate of the praetorian prefect, but even so the body of the praetorians did not proclaim him till they had heard the people do so.<sup>1</sup> However representative or spontaneous this demonstration was, an incident in the circus as early as 186 shows that Pertinax was genuinely popular with the people (p. 197). The day after Pertinax's murder, the people insulted Julianus in front of the Senate house, rejected his offer of money, and refused to acknowledge him emperor. After being attacked by the praetorians,<sup>2</sup> 'they seized arms and rushed together into the circus, and there spent the night and the following day without food or drink, shouting and calling on the remainder of the soldiers, especially Pescennius Niger and his followers in Syria, to come to their aid.' Of course, it was the defection of the Senate and (above all) the praetorians on Severus' arrival that finished Julianus, but their attitude cannot but have been influenced by the attitude of the people. It certainly influenced Pescennius Niger, as Herodian tells us:<sup>3</sup>

When the people met together they called upon Niger continuously, insulting Julianus, who was present,<sup>4</sup> and honouring Niger, who was absent, with the titles of emperor. On being given the news about the feeling of the Roman people and the shouting that was taking place continually at the meetings, Niger was understandably misled into supposing that he would have an easy success.

Before leaving Rome to deal with Niger, Severus took pains to conciliate, not only the Senate and soldiers, but also the people, by giving games and staging a lavish funeral for Pertinax.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herodian ii.2.2-10.

<sup>2</sup> Dio lxxiv.13.3f.

<sup>3</sup> ii.7.5-6; cf. Dio lxxiv-15.2.

<sup>4</sup> Julianus did his best to win popularity by attending the theatre whenever possible (Dio lxxiv.14.1), but evidently with total lack of success.

<sup>5</sup> Herodian ii.14.4 (games—if Stephanus' supplement is correct); Dio lxxv.4 (funeral).

Niger was defeated in 194, and if Severus had been prepared to honour his original compact with Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain, the civil war could have ended there and then. But by December 196 it became clear that he was determined to fight on:

We senators kept quiet [says Dio], but the people of Rome showed their feelings in no uncertain fashion. An enormous crowd had assembled to watch the last chariot races before the Saturnalia, in the Circus Maximus. When the six-chariot races were over, there was a demand for silence and then a sudden clapping of hands. There was a series of shouts, prayers for the welfare of the state. Then the people began to shout appeals to the goddess Roma, addressing her as 'Queen' and 'Immortal', and crying out: 'How long are we to endure such things?' 'And how long are we to go on waging war?'

'This demonstration greatly increased our apprehensions', added Dio, who was present at the spectacle and 'heard distinctly everything that was said'.<sup>1</sup> No question of a manipulated crowd here, any more than at the no less striking demonstration against the usurper Macrinus and his son in 217, again from the eye-witness description of Dio:<sup>2</sup>

The populace, finding it easy to escape detection at the races and feeling emboldened by their numbers, raised a great outcry at the horse-race on the birthday of Diadumenianus [14 September], uttering many laments and asserting that they alone of all mankind were without a leader and without an emperor; and they called upon Jupiter, declaring that he alone should be their leader . . . Nor would they pay any heed at first to either the equestrian or senatorial order who were . . . praising the emperor and the Caesar . . . and desiring the others too to agree with them . . . And so the populace henceforth regarded both Macrinus and Diadumenianus as absolutely non-existent, and already trampled upon them as if they were dead.

'This was one important reason', he added, 'why the soldiers despised him and paid no heed to what he did to win their favour'.

There was no shortage of such incidents two centuries earlier. The protests against the civil war of 196, for example, were as

<sup>1</sup> Dio lxxv.4.2-7 (quoted for brevity's sake in Birley's précis, *Septimius Severus*, p. 188).

<sup>2</sup> lxxviii.20.1-4.

nothing compared with the prolonged and violent demonstrations (including strikes) against the wars of the second triumvirate. According to Yavetz, the people's demands that an agreement be reached with Sextus Pompeius 'constituted a factor in influencing their leaders to sign the treaty of Misenum'.<sup>1</sup> Pompeius' immense popularity, in part though not entirely due to his control of the sea and so the corn-supply, and a terrible embarrassment to Octavian, was constantly manifested in the theatre and circus.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, when Octavian laid on games—tactlessly enough—in the theatre of Pompeius Magnus when the war was over, he was driven from the building by the curses of the people.<sup>3</sup>

Of course it would be wrong to suggest that it was only at the circus and theatre that such protests took place, in the early or the late Empire. In the early centuries it was not uncommon for the mob to lay siege to the Senate house in an attempt (usually successful) to coerce the Senate. At a trivial level, a popular demonstration in A.D. 14 virtually forced the Senate to vote a pay rise for a pantomime dancer.<sup>4</sup> In 29, when Tiberius wrote to the Senate with vague accusations against the elder Agrippina and her son Nero, the people, loyal to the house of their hero Germanicus, thronged around the *curia* while the Senate debated, brandishing pictures of Agrippina and Nero, praising Tiberius, and denouncing the letter as a forgery!<sup>5</sup> That day at least, no decisions were reached. On the death of Tiberius in 37 a mob burst into the *curia*, and forced the Senate to annul Tiberius' will and declare Gaius his sole heir.<sup>6</sup> 200 years later, when the Senate proclaimed two of their number emperors in rebellion against Maximin, the people, armed with sticks and stones, demonstrated against the senatorial candidates and forced the proclamation of a third emperor of their own choosing.<sup>7</sup>

But in the third century, as in the first or indeed the sixth, it

<sup>1</sup> *Plebs and Princeps*, pp. 13, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Yavetz, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Vell. Pat. ii.79.

<sup>4</sup> Dio lvi.47.2.

<sup>5</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* v. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Suet., *Cal.* 14, with Yavetz, p. 28. For other cases see Dio liv.1.1-3 for 22 B.C. (with Yavetz, p. 26); Tac., *Ann.* iii.14 for A.D. 20, and *Ann.* xiv.42 for 61 (with Yavetz, pp. 29-30).

<sup>7</sup> Herodian vii.10.5-6. It is a pity that Syme's recent study of the incident (*Emperors and Biography* (1971), Ch. X) concentrates entirely on the uninteresting figures of the two senators.

was normally in the theatre or circus that such protests took place; partly because of the licence traditionally allowed at the games, partly because of the 'feeling of power' and 'absence of a sense of individual responsibility' encouraged at a mass gathering. Add to these three categories of Yavetz<sup>1</sup> the sheer excitement generated by the games themselves—something the football fan can perhaps appreciate more readily than the sober historian—and it is not difficult to see why.

It would be far beyond the scope of this chapter to assess either the significance or the success of such varied popular manifestations over so long a period. For one thing, we have almost no evidence as to how representative they were even of the population of Rome;<sup>2</sup> our sources tend to use loaded terms (*plebs sordida*, *imperita multitudo*, *vulgus credulum*)<sup>3</sup> which tell us more about their own outlook than the composition of the body in question, and it would be naïve to imagine that bodies of people however constituted are never manipulated. Nor is it easy to judge what counts as success in such cases; a protest suppressed with blood may nevertheless make its point. Governments cannot always afford to lose face by admitting mistakes too promptly and openly. But even by the strictest criteria, many of the protests chronicled above were surely successful.<sup>4</sup>

We come at last to our central question. *Is there a significant difference between circus and theatre disturbances in the early and late Empire? And if so, wherein does it lie?*

One certainly gets an impression that the activities of the Blues and Greens of the sixth century were both more frequent and more violent than corresponding phenomena in the early centuries. But this is an impression hard to control, in part at least due to the nature of our sources. A collation of the extant chronicle tradition for the sixth and late fifth centuries suggests that we may have something approaching a complete list of the more important riots at Constantinople and Antioch during

<sup>1</sup> *Plebs and Princeps*, 19f.

<sup>2</sup> Whittaker (*Historia* 1964, 363f.) seems to me unnecessarily to exaggerate the role of senatorial pressure groups in popular demonstrations—and to underestimate the difficulty of rigging a convincing mass protest in a circus (see p. 237).

<sup>3</sup> See the interesting appendix on 'semantic difficulties' in Yavetz, pp. 141f.

<sup>4</sup> See F. Millar, *CR* 1963, 328, and *The Roman Empire and its Neighbours* (1967), 20–1.



this period,<sup>1</sup> whereas we have nothing remotely comparable for the early Empire. So for this and another reason to be presented in the following chapter (p. 222), it is not easy to assess relative frequency.

The question of the level of violence is no easier to handle. Almost certainly the conduct of the Blues and Greens was more violent; but then so was the reaction of the authorities. Constantinople, like all late Roman cities, lacked the relatively abundant police provisions of early imperial Rome. As a result crowds got out of control more quickly and were suppressed more violently.<sup>2</sup> And this level of violence, once attained, tended to be maintained as a matter of course. Modern study of the 'subculture' of violence has suggested that there is no necessary or obvious correlation between the degree of violence a rioter uses and the degree of provocation he has suffered. That is to say, there may be no significant reason for the high level of violence in late Roman riots; merely habit. Not that violent battles between the people and soldiers were unknown in the early Empire. Dio records how during the lifetime of the praetorian prefect Ulpian<sup>3</sup>

A great quarrel had arisen between the populace and the praetorians, from some small cause, with the result that they fought together for three days and many lost their lives on both sides. The soldiers, on getting the worst of it, directed their efforts to setting fire to buildings; and so the populace, fearing the whole city would be destroyed, reluctantly came to terms with them.

This reads like an entry from Malalas. Compare too the fierce fighting between the people and the praetorians in 238, shortly after the proclamation of Gordian III,<sup>4</sup> or the extraordinary story of the mintworkers' revolt under Aurelian (270/1), when 7,000 are said to have died on the government side alone.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> As suggested, not implausibly, by J. R. Martindale, 'Public Disorders' (1960), 28.

<sup>2</sup> See the fuller discussion of this point in *Porphyrius*, 237.

<sup>3</sup> lxxx.2.3; Ulpian is now known to have died 5 years earlier than used to be supposed, viz. 223 (see Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (1971), 153).

<sup>4</sup> Herodian vii.11, an incident incited by a senator possibly connected with the Gordians: see Whittaker, ii.234, n.1.

<sup>5</sup> See the recent discussion by R. Turcan, 'Le délit des monétaires rebellés contre Aurélien', *Latomus* xxviii (1969), 948f.—though, like other students of the affair, Turcan does not take into account Malalas' account of a similar revolt of mintworkers, *κράζοντες διὰ συνθηθείας τινάς*, at Antioch, apparently when Aurelian was there (p. 301 Bonn).

figure seems absurdly high, of course, but then what reason do we have for supposing that the figure of 3,000 killed in a Constantinople theatre riot of 501 is any more realistic? If 30,000 really did die in the Nika revolt, we may be sure that most of them were trampled to death in the press rather than cut down in direct fighting.

However, traditionalists do not rest their case on the frequency or violence of factional behaviour. It represents, they believe, something different in kind. In this they are surely mistaken. Every sort of factional disturbance we encounter in the fifth and sixth centuries (to leave on one side for the moment the anarchy of the last years of Phocas) can be abundantly paralleled in the first three centuries of the Empire. Indeed, as we shall see in Ch. X, it is the political demonstrations of the first three centuries that are hard to parallel in the fifth and sixth. Most factional disturbances of the late Empire were riots pure and simple. Where they did have more serious objects, they were seldom successful.

There is a difference none the less, but it lies in an altogether unsuspected quarter. The history of popular disturbances in the late Empire is in large measure the history of the Blues and Greens. The story of popular disturbances in the early Empire can be told without ever mentioning the Blues and Greens. It has not, I think, been noticed quite how sharp this distinction is. If it has been noticed at all, it has been put down to the assumption that the characteristic activities of the late Roman Blues and Greens were unknown in the early Empire. We have now seen that this was not so. Protest and riot had always been common in Roman circuses and theatres. Why then are these earlier protests and riots never attributed to the Blues and Greens, always to some vaguely evoked *plebs* or *vulgus*? And then, quite suddenly in the fifth century, it is Blues and Greens all the time. Why?

## VIII. Circus Factions and Theatre Factions

SCHOLARS have been so busy with deep and debatable theories about what they call the 'rise' of the factions in the late Empire that they have entirely overlooked what is manifestly the most important single change in their character between the early and late Empire. Nor have they appreciated the significance of other, simple, measurable facts, which, when taken together with this change, point to a simpler and more reasonable explanation of their greater prominence in the early Byzantine period. These facts are as follows:

(A) In the early Empire, up to and including the fourth century, the factions (partisans and professionals alike) were solely concerned with the circus—that is to say with chariot-racing. By the late fifth century we find that both partisans and professionals of the theatre and amphitheatre too are regularly called by the names of the four circus colours.

(B) From the late fifth century on virtually every demonstration or riot in circus, theatre or amphitheatre is expressly or implicitly ascribed to the two major colours: Blues and Greens. Before that date not one such disturbance is ascribed to circus partisans; it is always just 'the people' as a whole or some vaguely defined pressure group or gang: never the Blues or Greens.

(C) It is from this same date again, the late fifth century, that we first begin to hear of regular and violent confrontations between Blues and Greens throughout the eastern cities.

(D) Before (once more) probably the late fifth century, Blues and Greens simply did not exist in the eastern cities, except for Alexandria and Constantinople.

(E) Nor is it surprising that circus partisans should not be recorded in the eastern cities before then, because (contrary to popular opinion) chariot-racing itself (in the Roman style) was virtually unknown in the East.

Taken by themselves, not one of these points (even B) might seem especially significant. When they are put together, the fourfold chronological coincidence begins to look something more than coincidence. Could it really be that what seems to be a fundamental change in the character and activity of the partisans does after all reflect something so commonplace (in origin at least) as a change in the organization of public entertainments? Let us first consider the individual points in more detail.

(A) *Circus colours in the theatre and amphitheatre*

The earliest evidence for the circus colours in the theatre is the presentation of dancers to all four colours at Constantinople in 490.<sup>1</sup> For the amphitheatre, the first evidence is Acacius, father of the future Empress Theodora and bearkeeper to the Greens, who must have died c. 500.<sup>2</sup>

Apparent evidence for an earlier connection turns out to be illusory. A curse tablet from Apheca in Syria concerning a Blue pantomime called Hyperechius was dated by its editor, Audollent, to the third century.<sup>3</sup> But on grounds quite independent of the circus colour Robert long ago pointed out that the tablet cannot be earlier than the fourth century and might easily be later still.<sup>4</sup>

Then there is Malalas' notorious account of Domitian's exile of the poet Juvenal to Egypt for attacking the pantomime Paris.<sup>5</sup> Despite the eloquent advocacy of Gilbert Highet,<sup>6</sup> there is not a word of truth in the whole story.<sup>7</sup> When Malalas says that

<sup>1</sup> Malalas, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> Procopius, *Anecd.* ix.2, θηριοκόμος τῶν ἐν κυνηγεσίῳ θηρίων μοίρας Πρασίνων, ὄνπερ ἄρκοτροφόν καλοῦσι (so the MSS. and Haury/Wirth; ἄρκοτροφόν Alemannus, followed by Dewing—mistakenly, since the *tau* was normally omitted in popular speech; cf. LSJ s.v., and L. Robert, *Hellenica* v (1948), 87–9).

<sup>3</sup> *Defix. Tab.* (1904), nos. 15 and 16 (where the pantomime is mistakenly taken for a charioteer).

<sup>4</sup> *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (1938), 102; cf. Maricq, *Byzantion* xii (1952), 368, n.2 and p. 200, n.1 below.

<sup>5</sup> p. 262.22f., reproduced in essentials by Suidas' entry 'Ιουβερνάλιος, no doubt via the *Excerpta* of Constantine VII (cf. de Boor, *BZ* xxi (1912), 381f., xiii (1914/19), 1–127).

<sup>6</sup> *Juvenal the Satirist* (1954), Ch. III.

<sup>7</sup> The objections are arrayed by Michael Coffey, *Lustrum* viii (1963), 167–8, and K. H. Waters, 'Juvenal and the Reign of Trajan' *Antichthon* iv (1970), 71–2. I am not persuaded by P. Green's restatement of the case in *Juvenal: the Sixteen Satires*



Paris was 'dancer of the Greens', this is a typical example of his anachronistic guesswork. Knowing that Domitian favoured the Greens,<sup>1</sup> and living in an age when dancers were associated with circus colours, Malalas inferred that Paris was a Green dancer. All his 'information' about circus colours before the fifth century is of this nature.<sup>2</sup>

The case for supposing that the circus colours were definitely absent from the theatre and amphitheatre before the fifth century rests on much more than the argument from silence. We have a considerable body of information—largely epigraphic—bearing on the organization of theatre and amphitheatre entertainments in the early Empire. For gladiatorial and wild beast shows at Rome and in the West there are the studies of Friedlaender<sup>3</sup> and Balsdon;<sup>4</sup> in the eastern provinces L. Robert.<sup>5</sup> For the various associations of actors and dancers Robert again<sup>6</sup> and a recent paper by E. J. Jory.<sup>7</sup> Not only is it the case that not one of the many hundred documents relating to the theatre and amphitheatre mentions the circus colours (whereas virtually all the few dozen circus documents do). We know quite enough about the theatre and amphitheatre to be able to say with some confidence that there is just not room for the circus colours, in either the organization of the entertainments or the loyalties of the partisans. Indeed, the introduction of circus colours into the theatre and amphitheatre superseded all the earlier categories and associations, among both professionals and partisans. By the fifth century the 'Artists of Dionysus', 'Parasites of Apollo', 'Lovers of Arms' and so forth are all

(1967), 18f., still less by the far-fetched theory of J. Gérard, 'Juvénal et les associations d'artistes grecs à Rome', *REL* xlviii (1970), 309–31. As for Malalas' version, Juvenal did not (as Malalas alleges) reproach Domitian for being a Green, nor did Domitian set Paris up in wealthy retirement at Antioch; he had him executed. There is evidently a confusion here with a later Paris, probably the Paris celebrated by Hadrian of Tyre who died at Antioch (Libanius, *Or.* lxiv.41), and perhaps also the Maximinus/Paris of Antioch beloved by L. Verus (*HA Verus* 8.7; cf. E. Wüst, *PW* xviii.4.1538 (No. 4) and J. Bayet, *Libyca* iii (1955), 115).

<sup>1</sup> p. 54. <sup>2</sup> See p. 200. <sup>3</sup> *SG* ii<sup>10</sup> (1922), 50f.; iv<sup>10</sup> 205f.

<sup>4</sup> *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (1969), 244f., esp. 288f.

<sup>5</sup> *Les Gladiateurs dans l'orient grec* (1940), esp. Chs. III–V, with the supplements in *Hellenica* iii (1946), 112–50; v (1948), 77–99; vii (1949), 126–51; viii (1950), 39–72; and cf. xi/xii (1960), 220, n.4, *Bull. epigr.* 1972, no. 294.

<sup>6</sup> 'Pantomimen in griechischen Orient', *Hermes* lxxv (1930), 160f. (= *Op. Min. Sel.* i (1969), 654f.), cf. *REG* lxxxix (1966), 756–9.

<sup>7</sup> 'Associations of Actors in Rome', *Hermes* xcvi (1970), 224–53.

replaced by Blues, Greens, Whites, and Reds. In the early Empire the partisanship of the circus and amphitheatre had been quite different. The emperor Marcus was grateful that he had never been 'either Blue or Green, *parmularius* or *scutarius*'.<sup>1</sup> The humble oil-dealer Crescens was '*venetian(us) parmularius*',<sup>2</sup> the one when he was in the circus, the other for the amphitheatre.

The clearest material illustration of the changed situation comes from the abundant Blue and Green graffiti, none earlier than the fifth century, in Asian and Syrian cities that had no hippodrome. Of those where the inscriptions have been found *in situ*, most conspicuous is Aphrodisias, where acclamations to Blues and Greens have been found in both odeum and theatre. At the theatre in Miletus only Blue graffiti are still legible. In Alexandria (a city which of course had at least one hippodrome) a theatre has recently been excavated with a whole series of Blue and Green acclamations.<sup>3</sup>

It must be recognized that from the fifth century on a reference to Blues and Greens in a city need not imply that the city in question had a hippodrome.

(B) *Blues and Greens in politics under the Principate*

That the majority of urban riots in the eastern cities from the fifth century on were the work of the Blues and Greens needs no demonstration. It has not (I think) been noticed that they are *not* held responsible by contemporaries for so much as one riot or even a demonstration worthy of the name during the first four centuries of the Empire.

Whittaker's study of popular disturbances in the middle Empire finds four occasions on which 'the circus factions were involved'.<sup>4</sup> Let us have a closer look at them.

The first dates from c. 186, when the future Emperor Pertinax was campaigning in Britain,<sup>5</sup> long before he can have been seriously thought of as a successor to Commodus.<sup>6</sup> A Green

<sup>1</sup> *Med.* i.5.      <sup>2</sup> *CIL* vi.9719 (*ILS* 7492).

<sup>3</sup> All three sites still unpublished; see Appendix B, pp. 315-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Historia* xiii (1964), 366.

<sup>5</sup> *Dio* lxxiv.4.1-2 (that is, between 185 and 187; cf. A. R. Birley, *Epigr. Studien* iv (1967), 76-7).

<sup>6</sup> This is not to deny the possibility that he was privy to the conspiracy of 193: see Birley again, *Bonner Jahrb.* clxix (1969), 250f.

horse called Pertinax won in the circus, and when the Green partisans cried 'It is Pertinax', the Blues, 'in disgust with Commodus and meaning the man rather than the horse,' cried back 'Would that it were'. An amusing story to recall after his accession—but scarcely a demonstration.

The second occasion is virtually a duplication of the first, only this time (in 192) there is no reference to the factions nor again a demonstration proper, since the acclamation of the horse is treated purely as an omen for Pertinax's future rule.<sup>1</sup>

In 217 the Greens addressed a jackdaw as 'Martialis', the name (it was to transpire) of the man who had murdered Caracalla the previous day in Mesopotamia.<sup>2</sup> This quaint but apparently authentic incident (witnessed by Dio himself) can hardly be regarded as a demonstration either for Macrinus or against Caracalla, since no one in Rome could yet have heard of the assassination.

The last of Whittaker's examples is certainly a political demonstration (against Plautianus in 202), but there is no reference to the factions.<sup>3</sup> Neither Dio nor Herodian attributes any significance to the fact (which both report) that Caracalla and Geta supported opposite sides in the games.<sup>4</sup> Whittaker's claim that 'the partisans acted as bodyguards for the rival Emperors'<sup>5</sup> again lacks foundation. All Dio says is that Geta was guarded by soldiers and 'gymnasts' (*γυμνασταί*).<sup>6</sup> Properly this should mean 'teachers of athletics'; the context suggests a band of hired toughs rather than circus fans.

Whittaker has made the common error of simply assuming, on the basis of the Byzantine evidence, that the Blue and Green partisans would naturally be at the bottom of circus disturbances. In fact they are conspicuous by their absence from

<sup>1</sup> Dio lxxiv.4.3-4 (perhaps compare *HA Comm.* 15.6). The possibility (probability) that this second occurrence was rigged by Pertinax's supporters (cf. Birley, *Septimius Severus* (1971), 140) does not affect the fact that no demonstration took place.

<sup>2</sup> Dio lxxvii (lxxix).8.2; the games at which the event took place were held on Severus' *dies imperii* (celebrated on 9 April: *Feriale Dumanum* ii.3 (*Excavations at Dura-Europos: Final Report* v.1 (1959), 200). Caracalla was murdered at Carrhae on 8 April. A similar story is recorded by Ammianus; just before the usurper Silvanus was assassinated in Gaul in 355, the people in the circus at Rome cried out in a loud voice 'Silvanus devictus est' (xv.5.34).

<sup>3</sup> Dio lxxvii.2.1.

<sup>4</sup> Dio lxxvii.7.2; Herodian iv.4.1. In fact neither restricts the rival partisanships of the two emperors to the circus.

<sup>5</sup> Herodian i (Loeb ed., 1969), p. 391, n.1.

<sup>6</sup> lxxvii (lxxviii).2.2.

the many varied circus and theatre demonstrations of the early Empire—an absence that more than ever calls for an explanation now we have seen what a serious business popular demonstrations in the early Empire really were. And why should the change from non-involvement to near monopoly<sup>1</sup> be so sudden and complete when it comes, in the second half of the fifth century? The social and political explanations adduced hitherto will no longer suffice.

(C) *The growth of factional violence*

The question of the origin and 'escalation' of the urban violence of the late Empire will be discussed separately in a later chapter. Here I wish only to point out that, politics and demonstrations aside, rivalry between Blues and Greens, age-old as it was, did not as a matter of course take the form of regular pitched battles before the fifth century. Rivalry among partisans in the circus and (especially) theatres was lively and often violent in the early Empire, but even in this respect the spotlight never singles out the Blues and Greens as it was to do from the fifth century on.

(D) *Blues and Greens in the eastern cities*

It is naturally the turbulent Blues and Greens of Constantinople who have captured the attention of scholars. But according to Procopius and Malalas they existed in all the cities of the Empire<sup>2</sup>—a generalization that turns out to be better founded than one might have expected.

Over and above general references to their activity in Asia, Cilicia, Egypt, and Palestine, there is specific evidence for either Blues or Greens or both at the following sites:<sup>3</sup> Alexandria, Antinoe, Aykelah, Heracleopolis, Menouf, and Oxyrhynchus in Egypt; Jerusalem, Caesarea, Berytus, Heliopolis, Apheca, Antioch, and Apamea in Syria and Palestine; Aphrodisias and Stratoniceia in Caria; and (illustrating John of Nikiu's remark that Heraclius, sailing to Constantinople from Carthage in 610, drew support from the Greens in 'the islands and the various stations on the sea coast')<sup>4</sup> Crete (Gortyn) and Rhodes; Tarsus,

<sup>1</sup> Though see p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Procopius *BP* i.24.2; *Anecd.* viii.1; Malalas 416.2f. (cf. Theophanes A.M. 6012) and 422.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix B (adding Tyre).

<sup>4</sup> *Chronicle*, § 109.25, p. 176 Charles.



Miletus, Didyma, Priene, Ephesus, and Cyzicus. There are in addition some inscriptions from unidentifiable ancient sites in Syria and Phrygia, and two from Mainland Greece, one at Thessalonica and the other at Phthiotic Thebes.

Yet widespread and abundant though this evidence is, none of it antedates the fifth century—except at Constantinople and Alexandria, and even here there is nothing before the fourth century. This cannot be attributed either to chance or to the bias of the late chroniclers' interest in factional affairs, for most of the evidence comes from inscriptions and papyri.

Now we have papyri from Oxyrhynchus over the whole period of Roman rule in Egypt. Yet of the five papyri which name the factions of Oxyrhynchus, three date from the second half of the sixth century,<sup>1</sup> the other two from the seventh.<sup>2</sup> Dovetailing nicely with these is an inscribed pillar from the Blue club-house of Oxyrhynchus, firmly datable to the first decade of the seventh century.<sup>3</sup> From Heracleopolis we have six papyri, none earlier than the sixth century.<sup>4</sup>

As for the inscriptions, every epigraphist knows how sharply the rich harvest of inscribed monuments from the prosperous Greek cities of the high Empire falls away by the end of the fifth century. Thus there is likely to be some statistical significance in the fact that we have inscriptions to the Blues and/or Greens from more than twenty different sites between the fifth and seventh centuries<sup>5</sup>—but not one from any eastern city in the first four centuries of the Empire. Take, for example, a well-documented site such as Ephesus, so rich in inscriptions of the early and middle Empire; its eight factional acclamations (evenly divided between Blues and Greens) all date from the seventh century.<sup>6</sup> Or Didyma, where the *Corpus* signals only 20 out of 615 inscriptions as 'Byzantine'. Exactly a quarter of these 20 are factional acclamations, none of the earlier 595.<sup>7</sup>

There is the same sort of illusory evidence for their earlier occurrence in the East as for the earlier association of the colours

<sup>1</sup> *P. Oxy.* 145 (A.D. 552); 2480 (565/6); *PSI* 953 (567/8).

<sup>2</sup> *P. Oxy.* 152 (618); *P. London* 1028.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted above, p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> From the sixth century, *P. Stud. Pal.* viii.1179; all the rest seventh or eighth: *P. Stud. Pal.* viii.1180, 1087; *ibid.* x.197, 225; *Sammelbuch* 9154.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix B.

<sup>6</sup> Below, p. 315.

<sup>7</sup> See p. 315.

with the theatre. Another misdated curse tablet,<sup>1</sup> and more anachronisms in Malalas. Nothing was more important to Malalas than to record the factional preference of an emperor if it could be known (or guessed). Unfortunately, where he can be checked from contemporary sources, before the fifth century he is more often wrong than right. He even gets Nero and Caracalla wrong, and calls Marcus a Green when we have it on Marcus' own authority that he was neither.<sup>2</sup> When he tells us of battles between Blues and Greens at Antioch under Gaius, the fact that he locates them in the theatre is enough to betray the anachronism.<sup>3</sup> More serious is his account of Mariades, the man who betrayed Antioch to the Persians in 256 or 260.

According to Malalas' version (the latest of an uncertain and conflicting tradition), Mariades fled the city after embezzling funds destined for the purchase or maintenance of race-horses (*ἵππικά*).<sup>4</sup> J. Gagé has suggested that Mariades was the 'boss' of one of the circus factions of Antioch, even then (he argues) politically active, and that it was this faction which betrayed the city. The factions, he further conjectured, were at this time divided between Greeks (the Blues) and Syrians (the Greens),<sup>5</sup> the Syrians naturally being 'Persophile'. Mariades, then, would have been the leader of the Greens. In fact it is quite clear from the abundant evidence of the fourth century that even then factions of the Roman sort simply did not operate in Antioch. Chariot-racing there was a liturgy performed by curials.<sup>6</sup> And since Malalas happens specifically to state that Mariades was a

<sup>1</sup> *SEG* vii.213, dated by Mouterde to the third century (*Mél. Univ. Beyrouth* xv (1930/1), 106f.) by analogy with Audollent, 15-16 from Apheca, on which see above, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 257.21; 295.15; 282.12. It seems unlikely that he had any evidence for making Claudius a Green (246.10)—or for that matter Claudius II (298.21), Probus (302.6), or Carinus (304.10), though he might perhaps have had access to information on Galerius (312.10, a Blue). The only ones he definitely gets right are Caligula (244.15) and Domitian (262.22), both Greens.

<sup>3</sup> p. 244.15f., accepted not only (e.g.) by Bratianu, *BZ* xxxviii (1937), 96-7 and Downey, *History of Antioch* (1961), 193f., but (by implication) even Browning, *JRS* xlii (1952), 18: 'That the Blues and Greens existed in Antioch as elsewhere from a much earlier period as an organisation providing chariots and drivers for the races is beyond question . . .'

<sup>4</sup> p. 295.20f.; cf. Downey, *History of Antioch*, 254f.

<sup>5</sup> 'Les Perses à Antioche et les courses de l'hippodrome au milieu du III<sup>e</sup> siècle: à propos du "transfuge" syrien Mariadès', *Bulletin de la faculté des lettres de Strasbourg* xxxi (1953), at pp. 309f.

<sup>6</sup> P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale* (1955), 124f.

curial,<sup>1</sup> it seems natural to infer that he was a private citizen performing his liturgy, not a *dominus factionis* on the Roman model (unknown—as we shall see—in eastern cities at this date). The theatre, not the circus, was the focus for popular demonstrations in Antioch at this period. Malalas glosses Mariades' circus liturgy with the words *εἰς οἷον δῆποτε μέρος ἐστρατήγησεν*, 'whichever faction he led', from which Gagé inferred that he had led both factions in turn. There is a simpler and more revealing explanation for this puzzling phrase. Faced with the allusion to Mariades' *ἵππικά* in his source, Malalas would dearly have loved to add a reference to the appropriate colour (as he had to the theatre riots under Gaius). But he had nothing to go on. So he just remarked, regretfully, 'whichever faction it was he led'—an *apology* for his ignorance on this vital point!

One other apparent witness to the contrary should perhaps be mentioned. The Midrash discussed in an earlier chapter<sup>2</sup> refers for its lore on the circus colours to three well-known Rabbis of the second and third centuries A.D.: R. Jose, R. Jochanan, and R. Zera. J. T. Milik has recently suggested that the tradition may derive from Herod's hippodrome at Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> In fact the quotations are almost certainly bogus, designed to create a false appearance of authority and erudition. A fresh study of the Midrash by E. Patlagean has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that it is a straightforward work of fiction, solely inspired by the Roman tradition in its developed Byzantine form.<sup>4</sup> In all probability there was no hippodrome at Jerusalem under Herod in any case (p. 210); the earliest evidence for the colours there remains an inscription of the fifth or sixth century.<sup>5</sup>

#### (E) *Chariot-racing in the eastern provinces*

Those who have assumed that Blues and Greens existed in the eastern cities during the early Empire cannot have pondered the implications of that assumption. Since the colours were still restricted to the circus in at any rate the second and third centuries (the heyday of the Greek cities under Roman rule), the existence of Blues and Greens in those cities would mean that chariot-racing was organized there on the Roman pattern.

<sup>1</sup> *εἰς τῶν πολιτευομένων*, p. 295.20.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> *Biblica* xlix (1961), 83; cf. Jarry, *Hérésies et factions* (1968), 96f.

<sup>4</sup> *Revue des études juives* cxxi (iv ser. 1, 1962), 9.33.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 316.

At Rome, chariot-racing was frequent enough to give rise at an early date to professional corporations (the *factiones*) which saved individual agonothetes the trouble of constantly assembling and reassembling teams and drivers for (already by the time of Augustus) 17 days in the year (66 by the fourth century).<sup>1</sup> The Roman circus charioteer usually began his career as a slave;<sup>2</sup> if manumitted, he was apparently at liberty to move from one faction to another, but it is clear that the normal thing was for both charioteers and horses (as well known to the fan as the charioteer)<sup>3</sup> to remain in the service of just one faction.<sup>4</sup> Thus despite the regular turnover of agonothetes and (less frequently) *domini factionum* and charioteers, there was always a certain continuity in the circus itself. As a consequence, from as far back as our evidence goes, the loyalty of the circus fan at Rome went in the first instance, not to the charioteer, but

<sup>1</sup> For the facts and figures about *ludi circenses*, Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Thallus, for example, described in *ILS* 3532 as 'L. Avilli Plantae ser(vus)'; L. Avilius Galata (*ibid.* 5311), 'fact(ionis) russ(atae) lib(ertus)', looks like an ex-slave of the same Planta, now his freedman, as do his two fellow Reds Avilius Teres (*ibid.* 5287.13) and 'L. Avillius Dionysius, cond(itor) gr(egis) russatae' (*ibid.* 5295).

<sup>3</sup> See *Porphyrius*, pp. 47–8.

<sup>4</sup> It is often said that charioteers changed colours freely, but a closer study of the best-preserved careers suggests that this was only in the early stages. Diocles, for example (*ILS* 5287), though described as 'charioteer of the Reds', drove two years for the Whites and eight for the Greens before his first win for the Reds, with whom he seems to have remained thereafter. The same may have happened with Polynices, who won 17 victories for the Whites, 12 for the Blues 55 for the Greens, and then 655 for the Reds (*ILS* 5286); and Musclosus, with 3 for the Whites, 5 for the Greens, 2 for the Blues, and then 682 for the Reds (*ILS* 5281). Friedlaender (*SG* ii<sup>10</sup>26) quotes Scirtus (*ILS* 5283) as the only charioteer known to have spent all his career in the service of one colour (the Whites). It may be relevant to observe that in all that career he won only 7 first prizes, a wretched total. His 'loyalty' to the Whites may be due to an (understandable) absence of offers from the other colours. The career of Gutta who with 583 and 364 victories for the Blues and Greens respectively (*ILS* 5288) seems to have spent a long time with both at his peak, appears exceptional. Porphyrius' frequent changes of colour evidently caused a stir (*Porphyrius*, p. 165), and we know that his younger contemporary Uranius drove 20 years consecutively for the Blues before taking up again with the Greens, under whose auspices he had begun his career (*ibid.* pp. 141f.). Martindale conjectured ('Public Disorders in the Late Roman Empire', p. 71) that by the late Empire 'charioteers were permanent members of one faction and did not ride for more than one colour as happened in the early Empire'. This is not borne out by the evidence. It looks as if here also little had changed between the early and late Empire; the *successful* charioteer (like the successful footballer today) seems to have been equally free to change colours in both periods—if the offers were forthcoming and he himself was willing.



to the colour he drove for. The charioteer might change his allegiance, but the partisan (like the football fan today) would never do so. This pattern survived the take-over of factional finances by the Emperor, and at Constantinople as at Rome no charioteer, not even the great Porphyrius, ever had a personal following independent of his colour. This attitude, puzzling to the scholar perhaps, but understandable and familiar enough to the sports fan, is beautifully characterized in what Balsdon rightly calls one of the younger Pliny's stuffiest letters:<sup>1</sup>

It amazes me that thousands and thousands of grown men should be like children, wanting to look at horses running and men standing on chariots over and over again. If it was the speed of the horses or the skill of the drivers that attracted them, there would be some sense in it—but in fact it is simply the colour. That is what they back and that is what fascinates them. Suppose half way through the race the drivers were to change their colours, then the supporters' backing will change too and in a second they will abandon the drivers and horses whose names they shout as they recognize them from afar. Such is the overpowering influence of a single worthless shirt.

Things were quite different in the Greek world. There chariot-racing was just one event in what were basically athletic festivals, from the original four—those of Olympia, Delphi, the Isthmus, and Nemea—to the many scores of imitations that sprang up all over mainland Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt during the Hellenistic and early imperial age.<sup>2</sup> Italy saw the 'Italica Romaea Sebasta Isolympia' of Naples in A.D. 2,<sup>3</sup> followed in Rome itself by the shortlived Neroneia, the more successful Capitolia of Domitian, and several later foundations.<sup>4</sup> These were all (of course) contests for amateurs, men of free birth and social standing, men (particularly in the chariot events) of

<sup>1</sup> *Epp.* ix.6, as translated by Balsdon (*Life and Leisure*, p. 320) with one or two improvements from Betty Radice (Loeb).

<sup>2</sup> There is no comprehensive study of these festivals; but countless details are elucidated in many works of Louis Robert, notably *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (1938), many studies in his *Hellenica* (especially xi/xii, 1960) and *Opera Minora Selecta* i-iii (1969-70), and most recently 'Les Épigrammes satiriques de Lucillius sur les athlètes: parodie et réalités', in *L'Épigramme grecque* (Fondation Hardt xiv, 1969), 181-291. For a brief account, A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City* (1940), Ch. XV.

<sup>3</sup> R. M. Geer, *TAPA* lxvi (1935), 208f., L. Robert, *L'Ant. Class* xxxvii (1968), 406f.

<sup>4</sup> L. Robert, 'Deux concours grecs à Rome', *CRAI* 1970, 6-27.

private means—a far cry from the slave-charioteers of the Roman circus. Indeed, in most cases (perhaps always) the owner did not even race in person—though it was always his name, not that of the driver he had employed, which was entered in the list of victors.<sup>1</sup>

Yet modern works will state simply that chariot racing was 'equally popular' in both East and West.<sup>2</sup> Which sort, Greek or Roman? Is it in fact true of either sort?

A series of victors' lists from Corinth suggest that chariot-racing continued as a regular event at the Isthmia (now expanded to include another festival, the Caesarea) down to at least the late second century.<sup>3</sup> But out of well over 200 Olympionikai known from the imperial age, only eight are charioteers—and we happen to be informed that chariot-racing at the Olympia was actually discontinued twice during the first century.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, of those eight, five were Romans (three being members of the imperial family),<sup>5</sup> and two out of the three Greeks were locals, citizens of Elis<sup>6</sup>—as had been every winner for a century before the Romans helped to re-establish the event.

It would be wrong to paint too black a picture. Even so small a place as Ambryssus (in Phocis) had a regular chariot event in its quinquennial games in the third century,<sup>7</sup> and there is

<sup>1</sup> As emphasized by Robert, *BCH* 1935, 461-2 (= *Op. Min. Sel.* i (1969), 520-1). This is why women are so frequently listed as victors in the Olympic equestrian events, 'femmes fortunées qui entretenaient une écurie de course, et non viragos qui s'exhibaient dans l'arène'.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. H. A. Harris, *Greek Athletes and Athletics* (1964), 44.

<sup>3</sup> B. D. Meritt, *Corinth* viii.1 (1931), no. 14.77f. (A.D. 3); no. 15.35f. (late 2nd century A.D.); no. 16 (181); and the best preserved so far (with bibliography) W. R. Biers and D. J. Geagan, 'A New List of Victors in the Caesarea at Isthmia', *Hesperia* xxxix (1970), at p. 81, lines 65f. (A.D. 127).

<sup>4</sup> On the authority of Julius Africanus: see *Inscr. v. Olympia* (1906), nos. 220-1 (with notes); E. N. Gardiner, *Olympia: its History and Remains* (1925), 160; L. Moretti, *Olympionikai* (Mem. Lincei viii.8.2) 1957, p. 161.

<sup>5</sup> The future Emperor Tiberius (c. 4 B.C.), his nephew Germanicus (A.D. 17) and Nero (A.D. 17): Moretti, *Olympionikai*, nos. 738, 750, 790-1. The others are Cn. Marcius (nos. 743 and 745) and L. Minicius Natalis (nos. 846), son of the homonymous consul of 106. A recently published inscription reveals Tiberius winning at Thespieae at about the same time: *SEG* xxii.385, with J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1959, no. 184 and C. P. Jones, *HSCP* lxxxiv (1968), 228.

<sup>6</sup> Moretti, nos. 740, 868; cf. 672-5, 679, 693, 695-6, 697, 705 (all Eleans, often women—see above, n.1).

<sup>7</sup> *IG* ix.1.12.

similar evidence from Thespieae and Larissa<sup>1</sup> (Thessaly was still famous for its horses).<sup>2</sup> But the pattern is usually the same: the victors are either Romans (amateurs barred from the Roman circus) or Greeks from the host or neighbouring cities. Competitors from the Asian cities are extremely rare. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that chariot events were regularly held in the otherwise flourishing festivals of Asia Minor. And in view of the many hundreds of inscriptions commemorating both festivals and athletes of every sort all over Asia Minor, the argument from silence must be held significant. As against the scores and scores of runners, wrestlers, boxers, and so forth who could lay claim to the proud title *periodonikes* (winner in all four of the major festivals), during the whole Roman period only one such champion charioteer is on record: T. Domitius Prometheus of Athens.<sup>3</sup>

Next in repute after the four ancient festivals came the Capitolia of Rome. All the most celebrated athletes in the Greek world competed there; yet the only victor known for the chariot event is a driver of the Blue faction from Rome.<sup>4</sup> At an amateur level chariot-racing must have been beyond the pocket of all but the really wealthy.<sup>5</sup> It is not surprising that so few were either willing or able to keep a mobile stable on the road as they went the rounds of all the big festivals, 'from the Capitolia to Antioch in Syria'.<sup>6</sup>

Greek popular entertainments did not remain entirely uninfluenced by Rome. Gladiatorial games may perhaps be counted as the one real triumph of Romanization in the Greek cities.<sup>7</sup> Despite the oft-repeated conviction of modern philhellenes

<sup>1</sup> *IG* ix.2.526f.; cf. too J. and L. Robert, *Bull. épigr.* 1964, no. 227; *SEG* iii.335 and xxii.385. <sup>2</sup> Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* 615.

<sup>3</sup> Moretti, *Iscr. agon. greche*, no. 89. H. A. Harris's recent picture of Prometheus as a 'man who had bravely tried in the utterly professional world of horse-racing to keep the spirit of amateurism alive' (*Sport in Greece and Rome* (1972), 175) is somewhat over-sentimental. He might more realistically be seen as a millionaire pot-hunter who, by restricting himself to the Greek festivals, was unlikely to have encountered much serious opposition for the '60 crowns' he boasts of.

<sup>4</sup> *ILS* 5288, cf. Friedlaender, *SG* iv<sup>10</sup>279.

<sup>5</sup> J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families: 600-300 B.C.* (1971), xxv-vi.

<sup>6</sup> *IGRR* iv.1636.

<sup>7</sup> Inevitably one thinks of the way cricket was picked up in the British Dominions—and soccer in Brazil.

that gladiators 'never really caught on' with the cultivated Greeks, the nearly 400 documents assembled by Louis Robert speak for themselves. As in the western cities, wild beast shows were often on the same programme.<sup>1</sup>

The other major development of the period (a Greek one, though equally popular in the West) was the pantomime. The renown of its practitioners is well illustrated in the person of Tiberius Julius Apolaustus, honoured (not to mention other distinctions) by 23 statues in cities all over mainland Greece and Asia Minor.<sup>2</sup> It was even a subject of dispute among sophists (Aelius Aristides wrote an attack, Lucian a defence).<sup>3</sup>

Gladiatorial and wild beast shows were never part of the agonistic festivals. They were normally provided separately by priests of the imperial cult, at both provincial and municipal level.<sup>4</sup> From early in the second century pantomimes did compete in the festivals,<sup>5</sup> but theatrical shows (which normally meant the mime or pantomime) were also given separately. Like gladiators and beast shows, they were too popular to be limited to quinquennial festivals. Not surprisingly, it was often the same philanthropic or ambitious citizens who provided both. Thus we often find gladiatorial and beast shows mentioned on the same inscriptions as theatrical displays, *μονομαχίαι, κυνήγια καὶ θεωρίαι*, to use the standard formula. Chariot-racing, in this as in other contexts, is rare. A good illustration of the usual priorities is given by an inscription from Didyma recording the benefactions of a wealthy local couple: 10 days of theatrical shows, 12 of gladiators, and only then, after public banquets and the like, a bare mention of *ἵπποδρομίαι*.<sup>6</sup> There is no mention of chariot-racing in a recent study of the festivals of Greco-Roman Ephesus.<sup>7</sup> A list of the benefactions of sixteen successive priests of Ancyra under Tiberius shows only one chariot-race—part of an agonistic contest.<sup>8</sup> The implication is that outside agonistic festivals (where it was rare enough) chariot-racing was scarcely to be seen at all in the cities of Asia

<sup>1</sup> Robert, *Les Gladiateurs*, Ch. V.      <sup>2</sup> Robert, *REG* lxxix (1966), 758.

<sup>3</sup> M. Kokolakis, *Pantomimus* (p. 207, n.4 below), 9–10.

<sup>4</sup> Robert, *Les Gladiateurs*, 271; W. Liebeschuetz, *Historia* viii (1959), 123.

<sup>5</sup> Robert, *Hermes* 1930, 119–20.      <sup>6</sup> *I. Didyma* 279a.16.

<sup>7</sup> I. Ringwood Arnold, *AJA* 1972, 17–22.

<sup>8</sup> Robert, *Les Gladiateurs*, no. 86 (pp. 135–7).



Minor. It is hard to see on what grounds scholars such as Gardiner<sup>1</sup> and Moretti<sup>2</sup> can attribute the decline there of chariot-racing Greek style to the vogue for *ludi circenses* in the Roman manner.

Our literary sources for the early imperial East barely mention chariot-racing. Plutarch, for example, on a number of occasions links the provision of theatrical and gladiatorial shows as ways ambitious men seek recognition and esteem for themselves—chariot-racing never.<sup>3</sup> Compare Dio of Prusa's list: 'Yes, but does not the seeker after fame find it necessary to buy a lot of food and wine? And he must collect flute-players and mimes and harpists and jugglers and, more than that, pugilists and pancratiasts and wrestlers and all that tribe.'<sup>4</sup> Again, no charioteers. Lucian has much to say about pantomimes, gladiators, and beast shows<sup>5</sup> but nothing about charioteers, except to remark that the philosopher Nigrinus found the attention and adulation they received in Rome one of the many distasteful features of life in that city.<sup>6</sup> Epictetus too refers to the folly of a circus fan at Rome.<sup>7</sup> Men's dreams are often a good guide to the things that interest them most, and Artemidorus' *Dream-book* is an excellent guide to what men dreamed about in the Greek world of the second century. Athletes, pancratiasts, actors, dancers, gladiators were all obviously much in the minds of the people Artemidorus met.<sup>8</sup> Even when asleep they could tell a *retiarius* from a *provocator* or *Thrax*.<sup>9</sup> But not one of his clients ever dreamed of a charioteer.<sup>10</sup> Astrological books

<sup>1</sup> *Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals* (1910), 466.

<sup>2</sup> *Iscr. agon. greche*, no. 263.

<sup>3</sup> *Praec. ger. reip.* 802D, 821F, 822C, 823F; see C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (1971), 116.

<sup>4</sup> *Or.* lxvi (49) 8.

<sup>5</sup> See the references and discussion in M. Kokolakis, *Pantomimus and the Treatise περὶ ὀρχήσεως*, and *Gladiatorial Games and Animal-baiting in Lucian*, both Athens 1959 (reprinted from *Platon* x/xi, 1958/9).

<sup>6</sup> *Nigrinus* 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Diss.* I.xi.27; thus the reference to talk about gladiators, horses, and athletes at III.xvi.4 need not have the Greek world alone in mind (cf. too p. 213, n.3 below).

<sup>8</sup> To give the merest selection of references: i.13, i.16, ii.49 (athletes); i.62, iv.42, v.45 (pancratiasts); i.76, iv.37, v. 57 (theatre); i.32, i.35, ii.54, v.49 (gladiators, *venatores*).

<sup>9</sup> i.32, with Robert, *Les Gladiateurs*, 16–17 on the terminology (cf. too R. Pack, *TAPA* lxxxviii (1957), 190 on ἀρβήλας).

<sup>10</sup> The one or two dreams which do concern horses have nothing to do with the circus: e.g. iv.58; iv.46; iv.30; i.56.

tell the same story. F. Cumont collected into a fascinating chapter a host of allusions to athletes and entertainers of every sort in the astrologers.<sup>1</sup> Once more, barely a mention of the charioteer.

Such negative arguments could easily be multiplied. There is, for example, the complete absence of charioteers from the various flourishing athletic guilds of the early Empire;<sup>2</sup> or the almost complete absence of such telling signs as circus scenes, horses, and charioteers depicted on reliefs, mosaics, medallions, amulets, knife-handles, and so forth from the eastern provinces.<sup>3</sup> Above all, hippodromes are virtually unknown in Roman Asia Minor.<sup>4</sup>

Modern generalizations about the popularity of chariot-racing in the Roman East during the early Empire always turn out (where supported at all) to be based on its unquestioned vogue at Alexandria and the list of eastern hippodromes in a curious treatise which in sixty-seven chapters optimistically purports to be an *Expositio totius mundi et gentium*.<sup>5</sup>

Now Alexandria may scarcely be taken as a typical Greek city, and the incredulous manner in which both Dio of Prusa<sup>6</sup> and Philostratus<sup>7</sup> comment on the hippomania of the Alexandrians strongly suggests that it was indeed not typical in this respect. It may be added that (as its name, Lageion,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Égypte des astrologues* (1937), 75f. (Cumont's curious theory that all these texts refer to Hellenistic Egypt was soon demolished by L. Robert, *Études Épigr. et phil.* (1938), 76f.).

<sup>2</sup> C. A. Forbes, 'Ancient Athletic Guilds', *CP* 1 (1955), 238f. (xystarchs were normally pancratiasts, see Forbes's list, p. 248).

<sup>3</sup> For a good selection of such objects from the West see J. M. C. Toynbee, *PBSR* xvi (1948), 33. The only eastern sites to yield them are, significantly, the imperial capitals of the late Empire: Antioch (H. Seyrig, 'Amulettes et Sortilèges d'Antioche', *Berytus* ii (1935), 48-50) and Nicomedia (a racing quadriga relief of late imperial date—unpublished—shown to me by Dr. Nezih Firath).

<sup>4</sup> G. Forni's list in *Enc. arte antica* ii (1959), 654 is a useful starting-point, but very incomplete even on the literary side.

<sup>5</sup> See now the edition with commentary by J. Rougé (*Sources chrétiennes* 124, 1966), §§ 32, 49, 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Or.* xxxii.31, 40-6, 74-99 (note particularly the Homeric parody at 82f.). On the behaviour of the Alexandrian fans see now E. K. Borthwick, *CR* xxii (1972), 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> *V. Apoll.* v.26. It may be added that if C. P. Jones's Flavian dating of Dio's Alexandrian oration is correct (*Historia* xxii (1973), 302-9), then both Dio and Philostratus may well have had the same outbreak at Alexandria in mind, which might mean that their comments have a less general validity than is usually assumed.

indicates)<sup>1</sup> the hippodrome of Alexandria dates back to the early Ptolemies, long before Roman influence had reached Egypt.

Nor do the seven eastern hippodromes of the *Expositio* prove much about the popularity of chariot-racing in the *early* imperial east. In the first place, at least five and probably six were late gifts from Roman emperors; three date from the third century, three more from the fourth, and the last (Berytus, where we have no evidence before the *Expositio*)<sup>2</sup> is probably no earlier. Secondly, it is by no means a random selection; it contains virtually all the hippodromes in use at the time. Very few additions can be made.

In mainland Greece and Asia Minor only two are mentioned: those at Constantinople and Nicomedia. The former was apparently begun by Severus but completed by Constantine,<sup>3</sup> designed, like the one at Nicomedia,<sup>4</sup> to complement an imperial palace, built to adorn a capital rather than in answer to local demand. The only additions to be made in this area are at Nicopolis in Epirus (below) and Thessalonica,<sup>5</sup> the latter as part of another imperial palace complex.

The other hippodromes in the *Expositio* are all in Syria and Palestine: Antioch, Laodicea, Berytus, Tyre, and Caesarea. Even granting some kernel of truth to Malalas' improbable story that a Roman proconsul built a hippodrome at Antioch in 67 B.C.,<sup>6</sup> the extant remains are perhaps fourth-century;<sup>7</sup> if so, (once more) part of a tetrarchic palace complex. Those at Laodicea and (probably) Tyre were gifts in return for loyalty in the civil war of the 190s by Septimius Severus.<sup>8</sup> The one at

<sup>1</sup> Maricq's study of the Alexandrian hippodromes in *Rev. Archéol.* 1951, 26-46 entirely supersedes Calderini's entries in *Diz. dei nomi geogr. e topogr. dell'Egitto greco-romano* i.1 (1935), 116f., 124f., 146f.; see too now Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* ii (1972), 100-1.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Mouterde, *Mél. Univ. Beyrouth* 1930/31, 122-3, with p. 200, n.1 above and the inscription published in *Porphyrius*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> For the details of who built what, see R. Guiland, 'Les Hippodromes de Byzance: l'hippodrome de Sévère et l'hippodrome de Constantin le Grand', *BS* xxxi (1970), 182f.

<sup>4</sup> Lactantius, *de mort. persec.* xvii.4; and cf. *Porphyrius*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> Excellently studied by M. Vickers in *JRS* 1972, 25f.

<sup>6</sup> Malalas, p. 225, with G. Downey, *TAPA* 1951, 152f., and *History of Antioch* (1961) 140-1.

<sup>7</sup> No earlier than the second century and quite possibly as late as the fourth, according to J. Humphrey (p. 210, n.1), pp. 39, 45.

<sup>8</sup> The hippodrome of Tyre has only recently been excavated; no fuller publication

Caesarea, hitherto taken to be of the first century (and attributed to Herod) is probably also third-century,<sup>1</sup> perhaps again Severan.

On the face of it there were several other hippodromes in this area. But those at Apamea and Neapolis are not attested before the sixth century,<sup>2</sup> and I for one find it hard to credit the local tradition (not earlier than Procopius) that the hippodrome of Edessa was built by Augustus.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the Hellenistic hippodrome at Seleuceia Pieria<sup>4</sup> almost certainly fell out of use when that city was eclipsed by Antioch. As for the group of Palestinian hippodromes mentioned by Josephus (at Jerusalem, Tiberias, Tarichaeae, and Jericho),<sup>5</sup> it must seriously be doubted whether all or any were true hippodromes at all (the one at Jericho is styled 'the so-called hippodrome'),<sup>6</sup> especially now that the Caesarean hippodrome can no longer be attributed to Herod as a parallel. Perhaps rather parks or riding grounds, a sense for *hippodromus* familiar from the younger Pliny and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> That leaves us with Gerasa in the Decapolis,<sup>8</sup> Bostra in the Hauran,<sup>9</sup> and, moving around the mediterranean coast towards North Africa, where chariot-racing was certainly popular, Cyrene.<sup>10</sup>

It would seem then that there is very little evidence for chariot-racing in eastern cities before the third century. Even then, there is nothing to suggest that the racing that took place yet than *Illustrated London News* for 27 June 1970, pp. 23-5. The late Donald Strong thought a third-century date probable and the connection with Severus is an obvious guess in view of his similar treatment of Laodicea.

<sup>1</sup> Once again the verdict of John Humphrey; see his preliminary publication, 'Prolegomena to the Study of the Hippodrome at Caesarea Maritima', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 213 (Feb. 1974), 2-45.

<sup>2</sup> Procopius, *BP* ii.11.31f.; Malalas, p. 446.

<sup>3</sup> Procopius, *BP* ii.12.18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Polybius v.59.1.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, *BJ* ii.44, *AJ* xvii.255; *Vita* 27; *BJ* ii.599; *BJ* i.659 (cf. 666), *AJ* xvii.174.

<sup>6</sup> Maricq, *Rev. Archeol.* 1951, 36

<sup>7</sup> e.g. *Epp.* v.6.32, with Sherwin-White ad loc., and Maricq, loc. cit.; cf. P. Grimal, *les Jardins romains* (1947), 267, and add the example in Olympiodorus, fr. 43, with J. Rougé, *REA* 1961, 66, n.2.

<sup>8</sup> E. B. Müller and G. Horsfield in *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*, ed. C. H. Kraeling (1938), 85f.

<sup>9</sup> H. C. Butler in *Princeton Expedition to Syria* iia (1919), 275f.

<sup>10</sup> Vickers, *JRS* 1972, 28, n.27. I am leaving out of count the numerous stadia (i.e. running tracks) which have been called hippodromes from time to time but are clearly much too small to have served this purpose (e.g. at Anazarbus, Cyzicus, Perge).



in such hippodromes as there were was in the Roman rather than the Greek style. A probably third-century agonistic inscription from Gerasa records *hippotrophoi* among the victors.<sup>1</sup> 'The occurrence of *ἵπποτρόφοι* is interesting as a proof of chariot racing', wrote A. H. M. Jones when publishing the text.<sup>2</sup> True, but (as Robert saw)<sup>3</sup> the fact that it is the owner not the jockey who is counted as the victor proves that it was racing in the Greek, not Roman style. Remains of a hippodrome of Roman date have been found at Nicopolis,<sup>4</sup> which it is natural to connect with the Aktia established by Augustus when he founded the city. The festival, like the city, was entirely Greek.<sup>5</sup> We have seen already that, so far from introducing their own circus games into the Greek cities, Romans often helped to re-establish (or keep going) the equestrian events in the Greek festivals. There is no reason to suppose that the other hippodromes Roman emperors built in the East were intended for any but Greek games. In particular, the reign of Severus saw a marked increase in the number of Greek festivals founded in the eastern cities,<sup>6</sup> and it is natural to assume that the hippodromes of Laodicea and Tyre fit into this context.

It is perhaps against this context that we should read a curious chapter of Dio Cassius. In the second part of the famous speech attributed to Maecenas in Book lii, universally recognized as a political pamphlet relating to conditions in the early third century and probably written soon after the death of Severus,<sup>7</sup> Dio makes a series of proposals about the cities; no popular assemblies, less public building; and while some festivals were to be permitted (30-2), no horse-racing, at least no horse-racing 'as with us' (i.e. at Rome). No city but Rome was to be allowed horse-races 'held separately from gymnastic contests', so as to prevent 'wanton dissipation of vast sums of money, and to keep

<sup>1</sup> *SEG* vii.900 = *Gerasa*, ed. Kraeling (1938), incr. no. 194.

<sup>2</sup> *JRS* xviii (1928), 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Mél. syriens* . . . R. Dussaud (1939), 733-4 (= *Op. Min. Sel.* i (1969), 605-6).

<sup>4</sup> A. Baccin/V. Ziino, *Palladio* iv (1940), 15.

<sup>5</sup> G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (1965), 94.

<sup>6</sup> Most are listed by Hartmann in *PW* ii.A.1.961-4, to which add Robert, *CRAI* 1970, 23-4, and Barnes, *JTS* xx (1969) 125-8 on the 'Pythicus agon' of Carthage. For Severus' philhellenism, see Barnes, *Tertullian* (1971), 188-9.

<sup>7</sup> F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (1964), 102-18; even if Millar's date of 214 for lii is not to be pressed (cf. Bowersock, *Gnomon* 1965, 472), there are certainly no good grounds for putting it as late as Severus Alexander, as formerly fashionable.

the populace from becoming deplorably crazed over such a sport and, above all, to give those who are serving in the army an abundant supply of the best horses' (30.7). Presumably Dio is thinking more of western than eastern cities here (particularly in Spain and Africa, where chariot-racing was widespread), but if his anxieties did embrace eastern cities as well, it was surely because of the rash of hippodromes so very recently built by Severus; certainly at Byzantium and Laodicea, probably at Tyre and perhaps Caesarea too. It is interesting to see that, apart from its bad effect on public morals and the cavalry, it is above all the expense that worries Dio; he speaks as a member of the class that would be faced with the bill.

The one place where we might have expected to find *ludi circenses* in the East is in the Roman colonies, particularly those founded predominantly with Italian emigrants, such as the cluster in Southern Asia Minor recently studied by Barbara Levick. Yet even here there is no trace. Apart from gladiators and *venationes* we find only athletic festivals, complete with gymnasiarchs, xystarchs, and all the rest.<sup>1</sup> We may contrast the prevalence of *ludi circenses* (often linked with *ludi scaenici*, thus underlining the direct Roman influence) in the colonies and *municipia* of the West. In the small province of Hispania Baetica, for instance, there are no fewer than ten places—often quite tiny—where *circenses* are expressly attested, not to mention three more with a circus.<sup>2</sup> Where there was no existing tradition of public spectacles, the Roman games soon established themselves. Lacking as it did the arresting novelty of gladiators, chariot-racing made no headway in the East as a sport in its own right till the fall of the gymnasium.

Lest anyone see any significance in the fact that the *Expositio* always uses the technical Latin term *circenses* for both chariot-racing and circus buildings, it should be pointed out that what we have is only a fifth- or sixth-century Latin translation of a

<sup>1</sup> B. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (1967), 83. Her remark 'There is no need to assume that the Greek games ever replaced the Roman shows' is misleading, since gladiators and beast shows were just as popular in Asian cities with no Roman colonists. More significant is the absence of the more specifically western circus games. For some other objections to Levick's exaggerated emphasis on the continuing Roman character of Pisidian Antioch see E. L. Bowie, *JRS* lx (1970), 206.

<sup>2</sup> See the list in G. Forni, *Enc. arte antica* ii (1959), 652f.

mid-fourth-century Greek original.<sup>1</sup> We may compare Eustathius' Latin version of Basil's *Hexaemeron*,<sup>2</sup> where 'nonnulli autem *circensium* furiali ardore detenti' might well seem to imply regular *circenses*. But the original has only *τινες τῶν ἵππομαχούντων*. The term *κίρκησια* appears only once in the Greek world, on an inscription from Daphne of uncertain date, which its editors refer to the equestrian events of the Antiochene Olympia.<sup>3</sup> If so, the word would be used rather loosely (Latin *circenses* had a quite different scope from Greek equestrian games), and the reference might be to the more Roman style racing which we meet at Antioch after it had become an imperial capital late in the third century. The author of the *Expositio* explicitly links the *circenses* of fourth-century Antioch with the fact that 'the Emperor resides there'.<sup>4</sup>

We have already surveyed the converging testimony of inscriptions and papyri for the late arrival of Blues and Greens in Oxyrhynchus. Four other papyri can now help to fill in the picture, illustrating the change that came with the early Byzantine period.

First, a newly published circus programme from Oxyrhynchus (the first such to be found anywhere in the Roman world), which promises six races, punctuated by a series of 'turns'—dogs, gazelles, mimes, singing rope-dancers, and (blushing, no doubt, in such company) a troupe of athletes.<sup>5</sup> *μίσσοσ*, a unique transliteration of the Latin *missus*,<sup>6</sup> and the *πόμπη* (*pompe*

<sup>1</sup> See A. Klotz, *Philologus* lxxv (1906), 97f. (summary in Rougé, pp. 94–8). The anomalous use of *circenses*=circus (32, 49, 55, 64) is only paralleled by another late Latin translation, of Theodore Mops., *In Philem.* ii.271. As Klotz saw (pp. 122–3), at § 55, 'circenses bene positum et acramento multo ornatum', *ἱππόδρομον* has been translated *circenses* and its epithets carelessly left singular as in the original.

<sup>2</sup> Basil, *Hex.* 4.1. (ed. Giet<sup>2</sup> 1968, p. 244); cf. Eustathius, *PG* xxx.904–5.

<sup>3</sup> *IGLS* iii.965; I am not counting Epictetus, *Diss.* iv.10.20, where the reference is to consular games in Rome.

<sup>4</sup> 'quoniam ibi imperator sedet', § 32, with a similar remark on Constantinople at § 50.

<sup>5</sup> *P. Oxy.* 2707, with commentary by J. Rea (see frontispiece). The athletes are not (as Rea suggests) evidence for the continuation of athletic contests, but a modest troupe of professionals.

<sup>6</sup> The normal Greek term for race (standard in Byzantine texts) is *βάϊον* or *βᾶϊν* (a palm-leaf: see LSJ s.v.), perhaps of semitic origin (see the ancient etymologies quoted in Ducange, *Gloss. Med. et Infim. Graec.* s.v.).

*circensis*) that opens the proceedings, underline the entirely Roman character of the spectacle.<sup>1</sup>

The other three documents are as yet unpublished.<sup>2</sup> The first, a work contract, shows a charioteer, a citizen of Hermopolis, undertaking to drive the team of an Oxyrhynchite gymnasiarch in the 'sacred Capitoline games' founded at Oxyrhynchus in 273/4. The second is a petition from an Oxyrhynchite charioteer for tax immunities in respect of a victory in the *biga* won at the 'sacred, eiselastic, world-wide, Philadelphian, Capitoline games' of Antinoopolis two years later. The third is a rather similar document, notifying the municipal authorities of Oxyrhynchus that a certain Stephanus has won in the 'Dacian' chariot at what is probably an earlier occurrence of the same festival at Antinoopolis, in 272. Another example in the Greek tradition is the Isthmian victory won late in the second century by a team entered as 'the city of the Antinoites'.<sup>3</sup> Here we may contrast the evidently professional charioteers dressed in the Roman circus colours of a probably fifth-century painted papyrus from Antinoopolis.<sup>4</sup>

It is surely no coincidence that it is not till after the amateur charioteer, the sacred festivals, and the gymnasiarchs had gone that we find Blues and Greens at Oxyrhynchus, as indeed anywhere in the eastern provinces. It is significant that the earliest papyrus to mention a circus colour does so in connection with its *factionarius*,<sup>5</sup> another term from the world of *ludi circenses* till then unknown in the East.

### *The reorganization of public entertainments*

We may now return to our cluster of coincidences. Why is it that it is not till some time in the fifth century that we first find (a) Blues and Greens in theatres and amphitheatres; (b) Blues and Greens in the eastern cities at all; (c) Blues and Greens as the source of most public disturbances?

Exponents of the traditional view have taken it for granted

<sup>1</sup> For the 'Victories', presumably statuettes carried in the *pompa*, see *Porphyrius*, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> The first two (kindly shown to me by John Rea) are to be published as *P. Oxy.* xliii.3135 and 3116; the third I owe to the kindness of David Thomas.

<sup>3</sup> B. D. Meritt, *Corinth* viii.1 (1931), p. 20, no. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *JEA* xvii (1931), p. 1 and Pl. 1. See now Turner, *JHS* 1973, 192-5.

<sup>5</sup> *P. Cair. Isid.* 57 and 58 (see p. 9 above).



that as they grew in power the factions 'took over' the theatres and amphitheatres.<sup>1</sup> But 'factions' in what sense? Not the professionals, who simply did what their employers told them. And not the partisans either, who (whatever else they might do) had no say in the organization, still less the financing of the spectacles they supported.<sup>2</sup>

Natural evolution can be ruled out too, for the innovation appears more or less simultaneously in both East and West: at Apamea in Syria<sup>3</sup> no less than in Constantinople and Rome.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the wider causes and consequences of the behaviour of the Blues and Greens in the cities of the early Byzantine East, we must at the very least presume some major change in the character and organization of public entertainments, which (for whatever reason in the first instance) made possible the introduction of Blues and Greens into these unaccustomed arenas.

Just such changes did take place, though they have not hitherto been related to the 'rise' of the Blues and Greens. Before attempting to do this, we must first consider the changes themselves.

Early in the fourth century came what, but for the (at first sight surprising) silence of contemporaries, might have seemed a profound change in the entire life style of the Greek city: the disappearance of the gymnasium. It has also evoked surprisingly little in the way of comment or explanation from modern historians of Greek culture and institutions. 'It cannot be chance', writes one scholar, 'that the evidence for the gymnasia and their officials fades out just in the years when the civic estates and taxes were finally confiscated.'<sup>5</sup> Or from another: 'the collapse of the gymnasia (the focal points of Hellenism) under the pressure of Christianity more than any other single event brought in the Middle Ages.'<sup>6</sup> But it would be wrong to imply that it was from financial starvation alone that Greek athletics died, nor is there much to suggest that Christianity had any direct influence on its decline. Whatever some extremists might intone, most Christians of the early centuries were

<sup>1</sup> F. Dvornik, *BM* 1946, 123.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *ACO* iii.96.17f.

<sup>4</sup> Cassiodorus, *Var.* i.20; Greg. Naz., *PG* xxxvi. 301, 304.

<sup>5</sup> W. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration* (1971), 156.

<sup>6</sup> E. G. Turner, *Greek Papyri* (1968), 84.

thoroughly imbued with the athletic ideal, as illustrated by the athletic imagery so common in their writings (notably Saint Paul<sup>1</sup> and John Chrysostom<sup>2</sup>). Particularly striking is the Christian appropriation of the term *askesis* (properly the training of the athlete), and the metaphor by which the martyr or holy man could without any feeling of inappropriateness be called (almost as a technical term) the 'athlete of Christ'. In truth, the gymnasium died a natural death, unlamented even by the few remaining Hellenes of the day.<sup>3</sup>

By the Roman period athletics had become, if not professional in the modern sense<sup>4</sup> (many athletes were still men of consequence and means), more of a spectator sport than a way of life for the mass of the population.<sup>5</sup> It had long since lost its cultural role as a 'focus of Hellenism'. We happen to be rather well informed about student life in the fourth century, and it is plain that athletics no longer had any part in their curriculum. Indeed, the trend of intellectual life in late Antiquity as a whole (pagan before Christian) was thoroughly antithetical to the physical ideal originally embodied in the gymnasium. The withdrawal of the funds which had supported its institutions was merely the *coup de grâce*.

Another few years and gladiatorial games went the same way. Here too the cause is less obvious than usually assumed.<sup>6</sup> It will no longer suffice to say that they had never been very popular to start with. Nor is imperial disapproval an adequate explanation. Emperors both pagan and Christian had been banning the pantomime since Augustus—but it always came back. And the scarcely less brutal *venationes* were allowed to continue into the sixth century. Financial considerations may have played some

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *Greek Athletes and Athletics* (1964), 129–135.

<sup>2</sup> O. A. Sawhill, *The Use of Athletic Metaphors in the Biblical Homilies of St. John Chrysostom*, Diss. Princeton 1928.

<sup>3</sup> There is no full treatment of this important subject, but see H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*<sup>6</sup> (1965), 202f., and B. Bilinski, *L'agonistica sportiva nella Grecia antica: aspetti sociali e ispirazioni letterarie* (Acc. Polacca di Scienze e Lettere, Biblioteca di Roma, Confer. 12, 1961), Chs. 9–10.

<sup>4</sup> On the professionalization of athletics, see H. W. Pleket, 'Some Aspects of the History of the Athletic Guilds', *Z. Pap. u. Epigr.* 1973, 197f. and 'Zur Soziologie des antiken Sports', *Med. van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* xxxvi (1974), 57f.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration* (1972), 139.

<sup>6</sup> See in particular G. Ville, 'Les Jeux de gladiateurs dans l'Empire chrétien', *MEFR* lxxii (1960), 273–335, with Porphyrius, p. 228.

part, but hardly a decisive one; both chariot-racing and beast shows must have been more expensive still.

The truth is probably something more general, if less tangible: a genuine change of popular taste. Perhaps the same taste that had tired of athletics, since by Roman times the 'heavy' athletes dominated the field, the boxer, the wrestler, and the pancratiast; represented in literature and art alike as hulking toughs with torn ears and tiny brains. Epigrams in their honour brag of the wounds they have dealt and the blood they have spilt<sup>1</sup>—perhaps after all not so very far removed from the gladiator as one might have imagined.

But whatever the reasons, the disappearance, first of the gymnasium with all its dependent associations and most of the old sacred festivals, then of the gladiator, left a gap in the social life of the cities. Of the major public entertainments, only the mime and pantomime continued unchanged. It is surely no coincidence that it is precisely in the decades immediately following the disappearance of the gymnasium and gladiator that we begin to find evidence for chariot-racing as a sport in its own right in eastern cities: at Caesarea (in Cappadocia),<sup>2</sup> for example, in addition to tetrarchic capitals like Antioch<sup>3</sup> and Nicomedia.<sup>4</sup>

If it be asked how and why chariot-racing came to fill this gap in the entertainment calendar of the cities, the answer is simple: imperial patronage. Emperors had built hippodromes in the East before the fourth century, but it was not till the age of the Tetrarchs that they began to establish regular capitals for themselves on the Roman model. And (as we have seen) these rulers of a restored Empire regularly built hippodromes adjoining their palaces, which—like their predecessors at Rome—they no less regularly attended.<sup>5</sup> The stylized fourfold representation of the imperial family at the races on the obelisk of Theodosius in Constantinople is an eloquent commentary on the role the

<sup>1</sup> See the references collected by Robert, in *L'Épigramme grecque*, pp. 234–5.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Basil refers to 'horse-crazy' people dreaming about the races (*Hex.* 4.1), and at *PG* xxxi.285A to horses *γενεαλογούμενοι . . . ὡπερ οἱ ἄνθρωποι*.

<sup>3</sup> P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale* (1955), 124; Petit does not himself ask whether it was in the Greek or Roman style, but it seems clear from the evidence he collects that the latter was the case.

<sup>4</sup> Above, p. 209.

<sup>5</sup> Above, p. 182.

hippodrome had come to occupy in the life of the new capital before the close of the fourth century.

With such encouragement it is hardly surprising that chariot-racing Roman style finally caught on in at least some of the larger eastern cities. Imperial stud farms<sup>1</sup> were established in Thrace and Asia Minor (notably in Cappadocia)<sup>2</sup> to ensure an adequate supply of horses for at any rate the imperial hippodromes. With chariot-racing now a regular feature of city life rather than an occasional event on the programme of an athletic festival, professional organizations on the lines of the Roman *factiones* must have been set up to cope with the increased and regular demand for trained horses, equipment, charioteers, and hippodrome personnel in general. It is not surprising that in due course the Roman circus colours followed, appropriately enough once charioteers had become professionals in the regular employ of permanent organizations rather than independent solo competitors or representatives of individual competitors in the tradition Greek manner. Not everywhere at once, it seems, since they had not yet reached (or caught on at) Antioch by the end of the fourth century, while we find them at Alexandria as early as 315.

Thus there is no problem in explaining the appearance of the Roman circus colours in the *hippodromes* of the eastern cities. But we are still no nearer seeing why, rather later it seems, they spread to the theatres and amphitheatres, an innovation in West and East alike. It is in fact directly linked to the other major change in public entertainments at this time; their financing and administration.

Up till the fourth century the Greek cities had enjoyed a large measure of financial autonomy under what has rightly been called a basically 'passive' Roman administration. This state of affairs came to a sudden end when, under Constantius II, civic properties and revenues were taken over by the state. As a consequence, the state had to shoulder many expenses formerly met by the cities,<sup>3</sup> among which we are only here concerned with

<sup>1</sup> Procopius *BV* i.12.6; *BG* iv.27.8; Theoph. Sim. iii.1 and cf. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cappadocian horses had of course long been famous: for a convenient collection of evidence see Ramon Teja, *Organización económica y social de Capadocia en el siglo IV, según los padres Capadocios* (1974), 29f., 148f.

<sup>3</sup> For a good recent discussion, Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration*, 149f.



public entertainments. At Antioch, for example, the Olympic games and Syriarchy were subsidized from imperial grants.<sup>1</sup> Chariot-racing in the fourth century was a liturgy on private persons, but such a heavy one that the emperors often lent a hand.<sup>2</sup> Julian donated the city 3,000 'lots' of land tax free to help councillors faced with this liturgy.<sup>3</sup> Actors seem in general to have been paid straightforwardly from public funds.<sup>4</sup>

With the increasing impoverishment of the city councils, the financial responsibility of the state increased. We are lucky enough to have some figures for sixth-century Alexandria, where the councillors were asked to contribute 100 *solidi* for circus games, while the *Augustalis* was instructed to pay 320 *solidi* out of public funds for the purchase of new horses<sup>5</sup>—and this was presumably on top of the normal maintenance cost of stables and employees. According to Procopius, Justinian closed theatres, hippodromes, and amphitheatres 'even in Byzantium, so that the treasury might not have to supply the usual sums to the numerous and almost countless persons who derived their living from them'.<sup>6</sup> We have an exact figure for sixth-century Caesarea (in Palestine): 5,629  $\frac{1}{4}$  *solidi* a year were set aside from the revenue of certain specified taxes for the exclusive use of the *hippotrophoi*.<sup>7</sup>

In short, it seems clear that by the fifth or sixth century public entertainments were largely if not entirely financed out of public funds all over the eastern provinces.

Now we have seen already that by the fourth century all the old independent 'ecumenical'<sup>8</sup> guilds of actors, dancers, athletes, and so forth had disappeared. Thereafter, all public performers were organized on an entirely new basis; no longer grouped separately according to their individual specialities—dancer, bearkeeper, charioteer, or whatever—but in one

<sup>1</sup> Liebeschuetz, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Libanius, *Epp.* 381 (of 358).

<sup>3</sup> Julian, *Misopogon* 370D.

<sup>4</sup> Liebeschuetz, *Antioch*, p. 146, to which add Chrysostom, *In Ep. I add Cor. Hom.* xii (PG lxi.103), ἐκ τῶν δημοσίων αὐτοὺς τρέφεις δαπανημάτων.

<sup>5</sup> Justinian, *Edict* xiii.15 (with Johnson and West, *Byzantine Egypt* (1949), 104-5).

<sup>6</sup> *Anecd.* xxvi.8-9.

<sup>7</sup> See the inscription published by B. Lifshitz in *REG* lxx (1957), 118-32.

<sup>8</sup> But not before their standard title, οἰκουμένη συνόδος, had been borrowed by the Church for its 'ecumenical' councils, as pointed out by H. Chadwick, *JTS* 1972, 132-5.

common state-financed and -administered guild. The evidence is clear.

By 426 we meet 'quartermasters of race-horses and the stage'; to judge from the military title, these officials must have been responsible for issuing troupes of performers with their pay or rations and race-horses with their fodder.<sup>1</sup> And it may be significant that, when boasting of his lack of interest in the games, the emperor Julian claimed to employ no official who 'like a prefect or general superintends actors and charioteers throughout the entire world'.<sup>2</sup> Can we perhaps infer from this that such an official normally did exist as early as 362, with military title and wide-ranging authority over both stage and circus?

Two letters of Cassiodorus show that by the sixth century both dancers and charioteers were paid (monthly) salaries direct from public funds.<sup>3</sup> In another edict of 426 appear *cornicularii* (a high civil service rank) 'of the race-horses and stage', in an unspecified number of provincial cities.<sup>4</sup> From fifth- and sixth-century western sources we learn of the *tribunus voluptatum*, concerned with the supervision of actors.<sup>5</sup> It has sometimes been assumed that he did not exist in the East, but a chapter of John the Lydian seems to prove that he did—and connects him with the organization of chariot-racing.<sup>6</sup> The implication is plain that theatre and stables now shared a common organization. And for an unequivocal link between the organization of theatre and amphitheatre, there is the pantomime of early sixth-century Constantinople who was bribed not to appoint the future Empress Theodora's stepfather to the vacant post of Green bearkeeper. Procopius explicitly remarks that the pantomime (presumably the senior dancer of the faction) had the power to make such appointments.<sup>7</sup>

It is no surprise that so important and expensive a service as public entertainments was unable to resist the relentless pressure

<sup>1</sup> *Cod. Theod.* viii.7.22, 'actuarii thymelae et equorum currulium'. *actuarii* must mean something like 'quarter-master' (so Jones, *Later Roman Empire* ii (1964), 706; Chastagnol oddly equates them with dancers and charioteers (*La Préfecture urbaine à Rome* (1960), 237, n.4 and 281-2).

<sup>2</sup> *Misop.* 339D (ὕπαρχος ἡ στρατηγός).

<sup>3</sup> *Var.* ii.9; iii.51.

<sup>4</sup> *Cod. Theod.* viii.7.21.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, *Later Roman Empire* iii.213; cf. H. Jürgens, *Pompa Diaboli* (1972), 184.

<sup>6</sup> *De mens.* iv.25.

<sup>7</sup> *Anecd.* ix.5.

towards centralization and uniformity that is the hallmark of the late Roman world. If the state was going to foot the bill, it wanted value for money. Many festivals involved wild beast and theatrical displays as well as chariot-racing,<sup>1</sup> and a common organization must have simplified countless problems of arrangement and demarcation, not to mention cutting down on overheads. Most important, perhaps, to the mind of the late Roman bureaucrat, it gave the state total control.

This massive corporation drew its finances from one source, the state, but (as the numerous references to Blue and Green dancers and bearkeepers as well as charioteers show) for actual entertainment purposes it was split into two divisions, Blue and Green—or rather four, inasmuch as the presentation of dancers to all four colours in 490 implies that Red and White were (at this level anyway) counted as separate from their respective major colours.

Of all the old associations and partisanships of the Greco-Roman entertainment world only the four circus colours survived the changes we have been describing. For the partisan, of course, the disappearance of the old names meant merely that new ones became necessary. Whether it was his idea or the brainwave of some civil servant, once thought of it was almost inevitable and certainly the simplest solution to extend the one surviving set of names to *all* components of the new amalgamated entertainment guilds. Appropriate too, in that the rivalry of theatre partisans (more than) matched the long-famous rivalry of the circus partisans. Indeed, the theatre claque of Antioch (and doubtless most others) was already divided into two sections,<sup>2</sup> each supporting one of two rival pantomimes *before* its 'conversion' to Blues and Greens. Why invent new names, when the existing ones, the venerable colours patronized by five centuries of emperors, fitted the bill so neatly?

At all events, this is what happened. The consequences were far-reaching, the most obvious and immediate (though hitherto unappreciated) being a vast increase in the sheer *number* of Blues and Greens. They will have appeared for the first time in countless cities where previously there had been none at all because

<sup>1</sup> See (for example) the programme of sixth-century consular games in Justinian, Novel 105, with R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen* (1929), 67f.

<sup>2</sup> Libanius *Orat.* 41.9.

those cities did not possess hippodromes. Every city however small had at least one theatre, and we have seen already that most of the Blue and Green graffiti we have do indeed come from cities with no hippodrome. Chariot-racing became more popular in the late Empire, as we have seen, but there is little direct evidence for a substantial increase in the number of hippodromes after the fourth century,<sup>1</sup> nor is it likely that the smaller cities could have afforded so expensive a sport. It follows that there must have been many times more theatre partisans than circus partisans in the eastern cities as a whole.

So when we find more references to Blues and Greens in the literature of the early Byzantine age, this is not either chance on the one hand or proof that they had developed into something more than 'mere sports fans' on the other. There really were more of the new 'amalgamated' Blues and Greens. Theatre rowdies had been causing trouble for centuries in relative anonymity, usually in small groups of a fluid composition, perhaps hardly identifiable as groups at all. But once they acquired the notorious title of Blues and Greens, wearing appropriately coloured jackets, they became instantly recognizable and were bound to be singled out more easily and more often—by the law as well as by the historian. On the other hand, this increased publicity may well have played a part in actually increasing both the violence and the number of such disturbances. The growth of parallel phenomena in our own day has shown that punitive fines and excessive press coverage tend to reinforce and exacerbate the violence they purport to condemn.<sup>2</sup> Once one set of Blues and Greens had begun to acquire their deplorable 'Byzantine' reputation, others would emulate the achievement, unwilling (like the soccer fans today who defiantly chant 'we are the famous football hooligans') to disappoint public expectation by not living up to their stereotype. A spurious 'solidarity' was created; we hear, for example, of the Blues of Constantinople avenging a wrong done to the Blues of Tarsus (p. 286).

<sup>1</sup> Note, for example, that in the sixth century Procopius still reckons stoas, agoras, baths, and theatres the normal public amenities of a city (*Aed.* ii. 10.22); he does not mention hippodromes.

<sup>2</sup> See Stanley Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972), a classic study of the 'creation' of the Mods and Rockers of the early 1960s by the press and television.



These factors alone go a long way to explain the massive rise in factional disturbances. But there are other and more substantial consequences to the enrolling of theatre partisans under the banner of the Blues and Greens. Let us take a closer look at the theatre partisan.

The turbulence of theatre audiences was a commonplace at least as early as the second century B.C.—as Terence found to his cost.<sup>1</sup> To the passages of Cicero quoted in an earlier chapter<sup>2</sup> we can add Horace's famous remark that a visitor from another world would find Roman theatre audiences more of a spectacle than the shows.<sup>3</sup> With the introduction of the pantomime under Augustus<sup>4</sup> the situation went from bad to worse, and for half a millennium thereafter pantomime dancers were regularly identified as a source of popular disorders. Disturbances at the *ludi Augustales* of A.D. 14<sup>5</sup> were followed by more serious riots the following year, with the death of a number of praetorians and a centurion as well as spectators—the classic pattern for the factional riot of the late Empire. There was a debate in the Senate, and measures were taken for controlling the behaviour of both pantomimes and partisans.<sup>6</sup> Trouble continued, however, and the praetors, whose responsibility it was, were powerless. In 23 Tiberius himself raised the matter in the Senate again, and pantomimes were banned from Italy.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Prol. Hec.* 33f. *Prol. Phorm.* 30f.; cf. W. Beare, *The Roman Stage*<sup>3</sup> (1964), 95, 161 173–5; Balsdon, *Life and Leisure*, 272–3.

<sup>2</sup> p. 159 above.

<sup>3</sup> *Epp.* ii.1.182–98.

<sup>4</sup> Introduced into Rome, that is; the pantomime itself was by no means new (Robert, *Hermes* 1930, 109f.), nor can it without absurdity be called a 'typically Roman performance' (Beare, *op. cit.* 234).

<sup>5</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* i.54.3, cf. Dio lvi.47.2.

<sup>6</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* i.77. I am leaving out of count here the measures taken from time to time against mime actors (p. 161) since the cause was often political and I am trying to concentrate here on straightforward theatre rowdyism.

<sup>7</sup> Balsdon (*Life and Leisure*, p. 422, n.192), like Furneaux (*Comm. on Tacitus* i<sup>2</sup>, p. 508), infers from Suetonius' 'capita factionum et histriones, propter quos dissidebatur, relegavit' (*Tib.* 37.2) that only some pantomimes were expelled. But 'capita factionum' surely refers to the leaders of the partisans, not the dancers (who are already covered by *histriones*). Maricq (*BARB* xxxvi (1950), 400, n.2) was certainly right (against Friedlaender, *SG* ii<sup>10</sup>35) to interpret 'factiones histrionum' in Paulus-Festus, p. 86M, as 'troupes of dancers', but (a) in the case under discussion the *factiones* are distinguished from the dancers, (b) *factio* is in itself a perfectly appropriate word for rival bands of partisans, and (c) it is obvious that guilty partisans would have been punished (cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* i.77.5, xiii.25.4 for examples). Balsdon was misled by *histriones* in Suetonius (and *Ann.* xiv.4.4) into inferring that

On Tiberius' death Gaius at once recalled them.<sup>1</sup> Nero rashly withdrew the praetorian cohort which till then had at least done something to keep the violence of the theatre within bounds—and then offered extra incitements to the rivalry of both pantomimes and partisans. Things got out of hand, and by 56 even Nero was reduced to reissuing Tiberius' ban for a spell.<sup>2</sup> By 60 pantomimes were allowed back in the theatres, but no chances were taken of them bringing the Neroneia of that year into disrepute.<sup>3</sup> They were expelled once more by Domitian, recalled by Nerva, expelled again by Trajan (though they were back again by the time of his Dacian triumph in 107).<sup>4</sup> The astrologer Vettius Valens tells of a pantomime who was imprisoned during a riot (for which he was presumably held responsible) somewhere unfortunately unspecified in 123—and then released again in answer to popular pressure.<sup>5</sup>

From the earliest times Christian preachers had thundered against the danger to the faithful of the spectacles of the Greco-Roman world. Such condemnations usually embrace all spectacles without discrimination, but the one that is singled out above all others for its depravity and licentiousness is unquestionably the theatre. This is particularly clear in the case of Chrysostom, who frequently inveighs against both theatre and hippodrome.<sup>6</sup> It is indeed obvious that not a little of the attraction of the pantomime lay in its suggestiveness, and the obscenity of the mime is well known. Yet it was not on moral grounds alone that priests and bishops warned their flocks against the theatre. Several passages of Chrysostom suggest that he was well aware of the extent to which the theatre constituted an incentive

actors were meant. But *histrion* is (confusingly enough) the standard word in literary Latin for the avoided technical term *pantomimus* (Greeks normally used *ὀρχηστής*). Tacitus, corroborated by Dio (lvii.21.3 and lix.2.5), clearly implies that all pantomimes were indeed banned from Italy between 23 and 37.

<sup>1</sup> Dio lix.2.5.      <sup>2</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* xiii.25.4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ann.* xiv.21.7.

<sup>4</sup> Pliny, *Paneg.* 46.2f. (with B. Radice ad loc.).

<sup>5</sup> v.10, p. 231 Kroll: cf. Neugebauer and van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes* (1959), 121, for the date.

<sup>6</sup> 'It would be a Herculean task', wrote A. H. M. Jones (quoting a few examples), 'to assemble all the Christian diatribes against all forms of games' (*Later Roman Empire* iii.328). See too A. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity* i<sup>2</sup> (1908), 300f. (fourth German edition 311f.) with (for the Latin fathers) H. Jürgens, *Pompa Diaboli* (1972), and (for the Greek fathers), Lampe, *Patr. Lexicon*, s.v. *θέατρον* (nothing similar s.v. *ἵπποδρόμος*).

to physical violence as well.<sup>1</sup> For fourth-century Antioch he is fully borne out by his pagan fellow Libanius; in a city where there was a thriving circus it was the theatre, not the circus, which provided the rowdies and the riots.<sup>2</sup> The rivalry of the hippodrome, he claimed, was 'free from strife'.<sup>3</sup> For Alexandria, another city famous for its circus, the pogrom of 412 is said to have arisen from 'that inveterate evil in all cities, pantomime mania'.<sup>4</sup>

There is no evidence for rowdyism of this order among circus partisans in the early Empire. Even Dio Chrysostom's amusing and somewhat exaggerated address to the Alexandrians<sup>5</sup> has more to say about the disgraceful behaviour of the Alexandrians at the theatre (note particularly the aphorism at § 32 that 'it is in the theatre that a people's character is revealed'). Petitions and protests, of course; but not regular and violent brawls arising directly from the behaviour of the charioteers in the arena. Never do we hear in the early Empire of charioteers being executed or exiled. In part at least the explanation lies in the different nature of the spectacles. The pantomime played directly on the emotions of his fans, deliberately whipping them up to a pitch of excitement where they were capable of anything. Excitement no less intense was kindled in the circus, but it was not directly caused by the individual charioteers in the same way. At all events, the Blues and Greens of the early Empire attained only a limited notoriety. Our sources suggest merely that their rivalry was senseless and that they thought of little but race-horses. As late as the fourth century this is the worst Libanius can say of the circus fans of Antioch,<sup>6</sup> nor did Dio find much worse to say of the Alexandrians.

Once the ranks of the Blues and Greens were opened up to

<sup>1</sup> C. Baur, *Der hl. Johannes Chrysostomus und seine Zeit* i (1929), 192f. (cf. p. 199 'Viel schlimmer noch als Zirkus waren die Theater . . .') and ii (1930), 76f.; cf. too B. H. Vandenberghe, 'Saint Jean Chrysostome et les spectacles', *Zeitschr. f. Religions- und Geistesgesch.* vii (1955), 34-46.

<sup>2</sup> Petit, *Libanius*, 225f.

<sup>3</sup> *Or.* xi.268, *ἐν ἀστασίᾳ*.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. Eccl.* vii.13. Amphitheatre riots are less well attested, but one famous example is the battle between the Nucernians and Pompeians at Pompeii in 59; many were killed, and the senate voted to exile the ringleaders, disband all *collegia*, and close the amphitheatre for ten years (Tacitus, *Ann.* xiv.17: see W. O. Moeller, 'The Riot of A.D. 59 at Pompeii', *Historia* xix (1970), 84-95).

<sup>5</sup> *Or.* xxxii (above, p. 208, n.7).

<sup>6</sup> Petit, *Libanius*, 140-1.

theatre rowdies, inevitably this more numerous and turbulent influx overwhelmed the excitable but less openly violent circus partisans. There can surely be little doubt that it is the theatrical rather than the circus element that is mainly responsible for the marked deterioration in Blue and Green behaviour that follows the amalgamation.

The dominance of the theatrical element even in the hippodrome is nicely illustrated by a riot of 520, when on the day after the factions had been reconciled by the Emperor's guards, they assembled in the hippodrome and begged for their favourite—not charioteers, but pantomimes.<sup>1</sup> Similarly when the consul Longinus wanted to please the factions in 490, he presented them, not with new charioteers, but with new pantomimes.<sup>2</sup> We may compare a brief fragment of Malalas referring to the start of Anastasius' reign: 'there was a riot in the hippodrome; many people were killed and buildings burned, and the four dancers were exiled.'<sup>3</sup>

Unthinking use of the term 'circus factions' for the Blues and Greens of the late empire has obscured this significant change of emphasis. Nor has it been noticed that many of the worst faction riots actually occurred in the theatre, not the hippodrome. Two of the most terrible of Anastasius' reign, in 499 and 501, filled the theatre with corpses.<sup>4</sup> We have a full near-contemporary account of the second, in which 3,000 died, the worst such disaster before the Nika revolt.<sup>5</sup> As a result, in 502 Anastasius banned pantomime dancing (a traditional response) from all cities of the Empire,<sup>6</sup> having already banned it in Constantinople for a short period at the beginning of his reign,<sup>7</sup> presumably in punishment for some similar outrage. In 498 he had banned wild beast shows; contemporary panegyrists imply humanitarian motives,<sup>8</sup> but in a city engulfed by a wave of factional violence it is not hard to believe that Blue and Green behaviour in the amphitheatre was also a factor. Thus it was

<sup>1</sup> Malalas, fr. 43 (*Ex. de Insid.* p. 170, 31f.).

<sup>2</sup> Malalas, p. 386 Bonn.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. 36 (*Ex. de Insid.* p. 167.21f.).

<sup>4</sup> Jo. Ant. fr. 101 (*Exc. de Insid.* p. 142); Malalas, fr. 39 (*ibid.* p. 168).

<sup>5</sup> Marcellinus, *Chron.* s.a. 501.

<sup>6</sup> See *Porphyrius*, p. 231.

<sup>7</sup> Malalas, fr. 36 (*Ex. de Insid.* p. 167)—not precisely datable (Martindale, 'Public Disorders', p. 27, seems to identify this incident with one or other of the Brytae affairs, but the Malalas excerpts plainly locate it before the Isaurian troubles (fr. 37) and quite separately from the Brytae riots (fr. 39).

<sup>8</sup> See Procopius of Gaza, *Pan. Anast.* 16, and Priscian, *Pan. Anast.* 162f.



the circus alone which he left undisturbed. This is no argument from silence, for it can be demonstrated that it was precisely in the decade following the year 500 that the great Porphyrius rose to fame at Constantinople, honoured by an unprecedented series of statues in the hippodrome which we know from the extant inscriptions to have been erected with Anastasius' permission.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it seems clear that Anastasius positively encouraged the Blues and Greens of the hippodrome—at least in their harmless rivalries over charioteers. The pagan historian Zosimus, writing *c.* 500, reproaches Augustus for introducing, in pantomime dancing, an evil into the Roman world that was to fill its cities with *στάσεις* and *ταραχαί* for 500 years, 'right up to the present day'.<sup>2</sup> His immediate inspiration was no doubt the turbulence of 499/501, though his tense suggests that he was writing before the ban of 502. As with Socrates, his opposite number from the Christian camp, the implication is that the hippodrome was not a threat of the same order.

The factional troubles we hear of in Rome at about the same time (quite unconnected and purely local) also concern pantomimes.<sup>3</sup> The next major wave of faction rioting in the East came under Justin I. We have no specific details, but the chroniclers state that it spread throughout the Empire and lasted for most of Justin's reign.<sup>4</sup> In 524/5 severe measures were finally taken to deal with rioters, and in 525 an edict was issued banning *θεώρια* and expelling pantomimes (a familiar measure) from the whole East.<sup>5</sup> *θεώρια* here is normally translated 'spectacles', and while it might be unwise to exclude the possibility that Malalas meant to include hippodromes as well as theatres,<sup>6</sup> *θεωρία* is in fact the standard technical term for a theatrical show in the Greek cities of the Roman period.<sup>7</sup> Against the background sketched above—and especially in view of the singling out of pantomimes—it seems natural to conclude that once more it was the partisans of the theatre who were responsible for most of

<sup>1</sup> Porphyrius, 242f.

<sup>2</sup> Zosimus, i.6.1, with my comments in *Philologus* cxiii (1969), 108–10.

<sup>3</sup> Cassiodorus, *Var.* i.20, i.32–3.

<sup>4</sup> Malalas, p. 416.3f.; Theophanes A.M. 6012. <sup>5</sup> Malalas, p. 422.

<sup>6</sup> *Venationes* were very rare by now: Porphyrius, p. 229.

<sup>7</sup> L. Robert, *Études anatoliennes* (1937), 318–19, and in *Mél. Dussaud* (1939), 737–9 (= *Op. Min. Sel.* i.609–10); at no point do I rest my argument on the use of the word *θέατρον* alone, for it is often used loosely, sometimes unquestionably to denote a hippodrome.

the trouble. Again in 529 a disturbance in the theatre of Antioch led to what was proclaimed at the time as its permanent closure.<sup>1</sup>

The Antioch pogrom of 507 is the first such affair on record where the ringleader was a charioteer—Porphyrius. It is true that by the fourth century we do have evidence for riots focusing on charioteers as well as pantomimes. But a closer look might suggest that little real change had yet taken place. The riot at Rome in 355 was a demonstration against the imprisonment of a charioteer.<sup>2</sup> Similarly at Thessalonica in 390, the riot which Theodosius punished with wholesale massacre was again sparked off by the imprisonment of a charioteer (for a sexual offence).<sup>3</sup> It may be added that in neither case is there any mention of Blues or Greens; it is thus illegitimate to count them as 'faction' riots proper.

The author of the *Expositio*, in his account of eastern hippodromes, singles out Constantinople alone for its violence ('saevissime spectatur').<sup>4</sup> Of the Nicomedian hippodrome he says only that it played to full houses.<sup>5</sup> Rather illuminating here is a poem by Amphilochius of Iconium<sup>6</sup> containing a long invective against the games in three sections; theatre, amphitheatre, and circus. The last section is devoted to disproving what Amphilochius evidently felt to be the dangerous (and presumably therefore prevalent) notion that the circus was 'more tame' (ἡμερώτερον) than the other two. Far from it, he protests; the circus 'tears cities apart, causes the people to revolt, teachers fighting. . .'

πόλεις διασπᾶ, δῆμον εἰς στάσεις φέρει,  
μάχας διδάσκει . . . (153-4)

But this very general diatribe is followed by some remarkably precise allegations: the circus is said to lead to the downfall of hitherto well-ordered cities; riot stains the people's hands with

<sup>1</sup> Malalas, pp. 448-9 (in fact it was soon doing business as usual again).

<sup>2</sup> Ammian xv.7.2; was he perhaps arrested for magic practices, like so many charioteers in late fourth century Rome: (*Porphyrius*, p. 245)? There is nothing in the context to suggest that he had been arrested in the first place for causing a riot.

<sup>3</sup> Sozomen, *HE* viii.25 (for all the other sources—and some dubious interpretations—see I. Hahn, *Byz. neugr. Jahrb.* xix (1966), 350-72).

<sup>4</sup> § 50. <sup>5</sup> § 49, 'diligentius spectatur'.

<sup>6</sup> There is no ground for the early ascription of the poem to Gregory Nazianzen (as in *PG* xxxvii.1577f.): see now the edition of E. Oberg, *Amphilochii Iconiensis iambi ad Seleucum* (Patristische Texte und Studien 9, 1969).

the blood of rulers, and retribution follows in the form of mass executions.

How often did anything as drastic as this happen, we might ask? In the last quarter of the fourth century the answer is only once, at Thessalonica in 390.<sup>1</sup> So anxious is Amphilochius to discredit the unfortunate idea that the circus is harmless that he generalizes from this one (admittedly horrifying) case.

So it is the 'circus' as well as the 'factions' (p. 14) in 'circus factions' that is misleading. The Blues and Greens of the late Empire consisted more of theatre than circus partisans. This is particularly clear (as we shall see in the next chapter) in the case of Antioch, where the very active Blues and Greens of the late fifth and the sixth centuries are not, as has often been thought, a completely new phenomenon;<sup>2</sup> they are simply the theatre rowdies of the fourth century under new names.<sup>3</sup>

The Blues and Greens that were to prove such a scourge to the late Roman cities did not then arise spontaneously in opposition to the authorities of the late Roman world. They were in effect created by those very authorities. Not on the face of it a very wise move on the part of the authorities. Is it really possible that they were unfamiliar with the facts about theatre partisans laboriously assembled over the last few pages? Was it really just a disastrous mistake?

The next chapter will suggest that it should in fact be seen as an attempt (paradoxical—and not so unsuccessful—as it might seem) to control theatre partisans, and guide their enthusiasm into the service of the emperor.

<sup>1</sup> As seen by R. Browning, *CR* xxi (1971), 138. I have no doubt that he is correct, and that the poem therefore dates from 390 or later. Oberg and earlier editors had been content with a *terminus post quem* of 381 or thereabouts.

<sup>2</sup> So (for example) G. L. Kourbatov, *Congrès international des Orientalistes* i (Les Travaux xxv, Moscow 1962), 10.

<sup>3</sup> As hinted already by Liebeschuetz, *Antioch* (1972), 213, 279–80.

## Abbreviations

I HAVE in general followed the same practice as in *Porphyrius the Charioteer* (see p. xi). 'Bonn' refers to the Bonn Corpus of Byzantine texts. References to Theophanes are normally by page and line of de Boor's edition, but occasionally I give as well or instead Theophanes' own *anno mundi* (A.M.) dates. Fragments of Malalas and John of Antioch are quoted from de Boor's *Excerpta de Insidiis* (*Exc. Hist. Const. Porph.* iii, 1905). For the sake of consistency I have capitalized the names of the four circus colours throughout, in quotations from writers ancient and modern (whatever their own practice) no less than in my own text.

ACO	<i>Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum</i> , ed. E. Schwartz, Berlin 1914f.
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
BARB	<i>Académie royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques</i>
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut française d'archéologie orientale du Caire</i>
BM	<i>Byzantina-metabyzantina</i>
BS	<i>Byzantino-slavica</i>
BZ	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
DOP	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
I. Didyma	T. Weigand, <i>Didyma</i> ii: <i>Die Inschriften</i> , ed. A. Rehm and R. Harder (1958)
I.G.C.As.Min.	<i>Recueil d'inscriptions grecques chrétiennes d'Asie Mineure</i> , ed. H. Grégoire (1913)
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau



<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>MEFR</i>	<i>Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome</i>
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>

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